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Security Council

Seventy-second year

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7886th meeting

Tuesday, 21 February 2017, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Klimkin/Mr. Yelchenko	(Ukraine)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Arancibia Fernández
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Italy	Mr. Cardi
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Vassilenko
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Ms. Söder
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Mrs. Haley
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli

Agenda

Maintenance of international peace and security

Conflicts in Europe

Letter dated 3 February 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2017/108)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Tribute to the memory of His Excellency Ambassador Vitaly Churkin, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations

The President: As members know, yesterday the Council adopted a press statement on the passing of the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations (SC/12724). As President of the Security Council, I propose that the Council observe a minute of silence in connection with the death of Ambassador Vitaly Churkin.

The members of the Security Council observed a minute of silence.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian delegation is grateful for the warm words and expressions of condolence on Russia's irreparable loss of Ambassador Vitaly Churkin. We have lost an outstanding diplomat, a great professional, a talented orator and polemicist, and a soulful and kind-hearted person. He had encyclopedic knowledge that he often applied in practice, delving into the finer points of all issues discussed. Working at the forefront of international diplomacy and occupying the most critical posts, Vitaly Ivanovich defended the positions of his country for more than 40 years.

Thanks to his talent and brilliant mind, he often found solutions to what seemed to be impossible situations. He always sought ways to unify efforts and strike a balance of interests, while carefully listening to the views of his partners in debates. That is why he was respected by all who worked with him, even those who may not have agreed with his approach. The hundreds of calls and letters of condolence that continue to flow into the Russian Mission bear witness to that.

Vitaly Ivanovich will always remain in our memory as a principled diplomat of the highest calibre, a leader who demanded much but also upheld the highest standards. I again thank everyone for their kind words.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): In a press communiqué issued yesterday, the Government of Uruguay expressed its deepest sorrow over the passing of Ambassador Vitaly Churkin, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, noting that he was a highly seasoned diplomat who represented his country responsibly and earnestly and whose talent, professionalism and dedication were recognized by all his colleagues.

The Government of Uruguay offers its sincere condolences to the family of Mr. Churkin and the Russian Government its sincere condolences for their terrible loss. We should have wished to express to Vitaly personnally our great admiration of his professionalism and our pleasure in sharing his experience, knowledge and honest work.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China is deeply shocked at and regrets the untimely passing of Ambassador Churkin following a brief illness. We express our deep sorrow at his passing and offer our heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family and the Government and the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation.

As the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation for over 10 years, Ambassador Churkin was an able, experienced and senior diplomat. He made enormous contributions to the United Nations and multilateralism. He worked right up to the last minute of his life as an exemplar of dedication and professionalism, and was thus an outstanding representative of diplomats. We are deeply saddened by his passing, which is a loss for the entire United Nations diplomatic corps. Ambassador Churkin was a good friend to many of us present here. He was sincere and kind. Although we mourn his passing, his memory will remain with us forever. He will be deeply missed. May he rest in peace.

China joins with the Russian Federation and other Council members in playing an active role in upholding multilateralism and the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations, the maintenance of world peace and the promotion of common development.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): Let me say from the bottom of my heart that the passing of Ambassador Vitaly Churkin is a great tragedy, not just for his family and Russia but for the Organization and multilateral diplomacy, at a time when the United Nations is needed more than ever. One need not delve into this at length. These are not normal times. This is a period when we need a person like Vitaly — a patriot for his country, no doubt, but also a diplomat whom we could trust at a time when that quality is not found in abundance. He would never mislead you and was a person who allowed space for mutual accommodation. One thing is very clear — he left us a time when people like him are

needed the most. On behalf of my Government, I want to express condolences to his family, his colleagues, the United Nations family and the Government of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Arancibia Fernández (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like at the outset, on behalf of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, to offer our most sincere condolences to the bereaved family, the Mission of the Russian Federation, the Government and the people of Russia on the passing of Ambassador Vitaly Churkin, who was a great exponent of global diplomacy.

The Bolivian Mission to the United Nations regrets the loss of one of the most brilliant Ambassadors in our forum — a fervent defender of multilateralism who always managed to build bridges for dialogue and agreement between diverging positions, thereby resolving the most difficult issues, as with the ceasefire agreement in Syria, which was a milestone that would not have been possible without Ambassador Churkin's work and commitment to peace. His principled position was also apparent in other situations, such as that in Palestine and his opposition to neocolonialism.

Lastly, on behalf of Ambassador Llorentty Soliz, who is travelling and therefore not able to attend today's meeting, I extend our most sincere condolences to the family of Ambassador Churkin. Ambassador Llorentty Soliz considered him a brilliant colleague and a close, beloved friend. We appreciated his eloquent speeches, which contributed greatly to the debates held in this Chamber. May his soul rest in peace.

Mr. Vassilenko (Kazakhstan) (*spoke in Russian*): We were saddened to learn yesterday of the untimely passing of Vitaly Ivanovich Churkin, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations. On behalf of Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov and the entire Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, we convey to him our deepest condolences to the bereaved family and to the Russian delegation on the passing of such a brilliant diplomat.

Vitaly Ivanovich Churkin was an outstanding individual who defended the interests of his country and made a significant contribution to strengthening the principles of multilateral diplomacy. Saddened by the news, our Minister, who used to be the Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the United Nations, said:

"The passing of Vitaly Ivanovich, with whom I worked for the past three years in the United Nations, is for me a personal tragedy. It is an intolerable loss for the whole diplomatic corps. He was an outstanding person, a good friend, a reliable ally and a true professional. We shall always remember him. May he rest in peace."

Mr. Bessho (Japan): I was deeply shocked and saddened by the news of the passing of Ambassador Vitaly Churkin. I happened to meet him on Sunday at lunchtime; coincidentally, we we were seated next to each other at a restaurant. He was with his wife, I was with my wife, and we were all very happy at the time. In fact, he had arrived a bit after I did, so I did not realize that he was there. I suddenly heard a voice saying, Koro, what do you recommend? I looked back and there was Vitaly, looking happy, looking very well and with his usual big smile.

We happened to be of the same age, so while a lot of heated discussions took place in the Chamber and in the consultation room, I always had something that I felt for him. He was certainly a great, true, outstanding diplomat. He worked hard for his country, but at the same time we all loved him for his humour and his willingness to try to resolve issues. May he rest in peace.

Ms. Haley (United States of America): I should like to express the deepest condolences of the United States on the passing of Ambassador Vitaly Churkin. I did not have the honour of working with Vitaly for very long, but his diplomacy will be long remembered. He was a fierce advocate for his country. He was a consummate diplomat. He was brilliant, wise, gracious and funny. He could spot even the narrowest opportunities to find a compromise. Having spent the early part of his career in the United States, Vitaly also recognized the value of closer ties between our two countries.

Vitaly's passing is a shock to all of us and a great loss. Let me once again, on behalf of the United States, offer our thoughts and prayers to Vitaly's family, to our colleagues at the Russian Mission and to the people of Russia. God bless.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): Like others, I should like to express my deepest personal condolences to the delegation of the Russian Federation and to the family and friends of Vitaly Churkin. Vitaly was an exceptional diplomat and a truly remarkable man. We disagreed on many issues, but I always found him to be an honest and decent colleague, no matter the issues, no

matter the positions. It has not really sunk in yet that he has died. I will remember him every day. My thoughts go out to Irina, to their children, to their family, to Petr, to all the members of the Russian delegation, to all Russian diplomats everywhere.

I will always remember the lessons that I learned from Vitaly. He was a diplomatic giant, a maestro of the Security Council. May he rest in peace.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*). On behalf of France and on my own behalf, I should like to pay special tribute to our colleague and friend Vitaly Churkin. I should like to convey to his wife, Irina, and to his family our most sincere condolences and our deepest sadness, which I would also convey to all of the Russian Mission.

Vitaly Churkin was an exceptional representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations. Beyond our differences, we always worked in a spirit of mutual respect and personal friendship. Vitaly Churkin was more than an exceptional diplomat, more than a fearsome negotiator; he was a master of diplomacy. He was one of the most talented diplomats I ever met. We will miss him greatly, and his spirit will remain here in the Security Council with us. I will never forget him.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): Among the many, many expressions of sympathy we have heard since yesterday in memory of our illustrious colleague Vitaly Churkin, whose affection and friendship we shall sorely miss, one in particular struck me, and I should like to reiterate it here:

(*spoke in English*)

> "With Ambassador Churkin's passing, the United Nations has lost a highly intelligent, frank, wise and dynamic presence and a diplomat committed to the dignity of the Security Council."

(*spoke in French*)

As was already done by the Foreign Minister of Senegal yesterday in a letter to his counterpart, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Mr. Sergey Lavrov, I would like personally and on behalf of my entire delegation to convey to Ambassador Iliichev our most heartfelt condolences on the passing of a person whom many of us so rightly considered to embody the spirit of the Security Council.

The Secretary-General, as has been said here, has contributed to a surge in diplomacy. Once again I would quote Mr. Churkin himself, in 2011, who, in this very Chamber, said the following:

(*spoke in English*)

> "We also understand the concern that the Council may too often resort to Chapter VII of the Charter, including the application of sanctions. In that regard, we stress that the Russian Federation has consistently called on the Council to make more active use of the toolkit of preventive diplomacy and to invest in the development of mechanisms for the peaceful settlement of disputes. The provisions of Chapters VI and VIII should be fully exploited. Sanctions and the use of force to settle conflict are appropriate when all possibilities for peaceful settlement have been exhausted, the threat to international peace and security is clear, and the decision to resort to Chapter VII enjoys the broadest possible support of Council members." (*S/PV.6672, pp. 3-4*)

(*spoke in French*)

I would ask Mr. Iliichev to convey to the members of his delegation and to the bereaved family and the Government and the people of the Russian Federation our most heartfelt condolences. May Vitaly's soul rest in peace.

Mr. Cardi (Italy): I also wish to express my personal sorrow and that of my authorities for the loss of Ambassador Vitaly Churkin. He was an outstanding diplomat. Above all, he was a loyal colleague, someone who was always transparent and able to serve the best interests of his country. He was also a friend. I admired him — we admired him — and we will miss his professional abilities and his warm, personal human touch. Our condolences go to his wife and children and the rest of his family, his friends, Mr. Iliichev and his other colleagues at the Russian Mission, and the Russian authorities.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): My country's delegation would like to express its most sincere condolences to the Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations as well to the Government and the people of Russia for the passing of Ambassador Vitaly Churkin. In our view, Ambassador Churkin was an exceptional diplomat when it came to the United Nations and the Security Council. He deserved the respect of all the delegations. Thanks to his professionalism and credibility, his sudden passing

is a great loss not only for Russian diplomacy but also for the Security Council, the United Nations and multilateral diplomacy.

Ms. Söder (Sweden): When I arrived in New York last night to take part in today's debate on European security, I was met by the news that Ambassador Vitaly Churkin had passed away. The Swedish Government, our Permanent Representative Olof Skoog, who is travelling, and I are deeply saddened by this news. I would like to express our sincere condolences to the family of Vitaly Churkin, to our colleagues in the Mission, here represented by Mr. Iliichev, to the Russian Government and to the people of the Russian Federation.

On a personal note, let me say that I will certainly miss the lively and fruitful conversations I had during almost all of my visits here in New York in the last few years. Vitaly Churkin will certainly be greatly missed.

The President: I now give the floor to the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: I was flying yesterday evening from Lisbon to New York when, during the flight, one of the flight attendants came to me with a small note saying that it was coming from the Captain. The note said that Vitaly Churkin had passed away. I must confess that my first reaction was not to believe it. I had not had the opportunity to work with him for a long time, as has happened with many other members of the Security Council, but I always felt that he was one of those persons who represent life itself.

Unfortunately, it was not a joke in bad taste, nor was it misinformation; it was the truth. I believe that Vitaly Churkin was not only an outstanding diplomat, but an extraordinary human being who possessed a unique combination of intelligence, knowledge, and firmness in the expression of his beliefs. He was also a man with a remarkable sense of humour and an enormous warmth that would make us all feel a natural tendency to become friends.

I want to express my deepest condolences to Mrs. Irina Churkina, to Vitaly's family, to the Government and the people of the Russian Federation, and most especially to Vitaly Churkin's colleagues in the Russian Mission and in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

I think Vitaly's passing represents a deep loss for all of us at the United Nations, including for the members of the Security Council, where his distinctive voice was ever present over the past decade and where that voice will indeed be missed in the sessions to come.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Maintenance of international peace and security

Conflicts in Europe

Letter dated 3 February 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2017/108)

The President: I wish to warmly welcome the Secretary-General, Ministers and other distinguished representatives present in the Security Council Chamber. Their presence today emphasizes and underscores the importance of the subject matter under discussion.

In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Albania, Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Malaysia, Montenegro, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Switzerland, Turkey, Uzbekistan and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Lamberto Zannier, Secretary General of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and Ms. Helga Schmid, Secretary General of the European Union's European External Action Service.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I also invite Mr. Altai Efendiev, Secretary General of the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development - GUAM, to participate in today's meeting.

I propose that the Council invite the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of the Holy See to the United Nations to participate in this meeting, in

accordance with the provisional rules of procedure and the previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/108, which contains a letter dated 3 February 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting a concept paper on the item under consideration.

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: I thank the Ukrainian Presidency for convening this meeting, which is an opportunity to build on last month's debate on preventing conflict (see S/PV.7857) in the most tangible and concrete ways.

The two global conflicts that ignited in Europe during the first half of the last century played a foundational role in the United Nations and in the Security Council, which was born from an overwhelming conviction that such wars can and must be prevented. For the past 70 years, the countries of Europe have been at the forefront of conflict prevention. European institutions have shown the effectiveness of binding countries together with rules-based mechanisms to resolve differences without resorting to violence.

(*spoke in French*)

European leaders have developed a sophisticated collective peace-and-security apparatus and have striven to promote human rights — civil and political rights, as well as social, economic and cultural rights. Many European societies are multicultural, multi-faith and multi-ethnic. The countries and communities that have invested politically and economically in cohesion and inclusion have shown that diversity spawns creativity and innovation. That being said, we should not take peace and prosperity in Europe for granted. The transition to a multipolar world has increased uncertainties and risks. We need multilateral institutions and sound regional organizations to maintain peace and stability as we address today's new and dangerous challenges. At a time when serious conflicts persist in Europe, new issues and threats have emerged — populism, nationalism, xenophobia and violent extremism are the causes and repercussions of conflicts.

(*spoke in English*)

The Security Council is seized of many of the conflict situations in the region. The United Nations is working in a complementary way with regional organizations and mechanisms that were created to deal with those challenges in line with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. We are leading some of the peace efforts in Europe, including negotiations to reach a comprehensive and durable settlement to the long-standing Cyprus question. The United Nations and I personally are at the disposal of the two Cypriot communities and of the guarantor Powers to support a search for a solution that is acceptable to all.

The United Nations is working alongside the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Union (EU) in co-chairing the Geneva international discussions on Georgia. In the Balkans, we have been working closely with our regional partners to support sustainable peace in Kosovo, in the context of resolution 1244 (1999). Thanks to the efforts of my Special Envoy, the United Nations is facilitating discussions aimed at addressing the so-called name issue between the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Greece. Elsewhere, our work complements the efforts of regional actors and mechanisms, including the OSCE, the EU and others, to address situations in the South Caucasus and Moldova, as well as the current conflict in Ukraine. The United Nations system is also fully engaged on the ground in peacebuilding, governance, human rights, development and the rule of law. Such multi-dimensional work is at the nexus between conflict prevention and sustaining peace, supporting stability in the region and beyond.

The term "frozen conflict", which is often used to refer to conflicts in Europe is misleading. Until peace agreements are signed and implemented, the risk of renewed violence remains, as we saw last April in Nagorno-Karabakh in the South Caucasus. The United Nations fully supports the efforts of the OSCE's Minsk Group and urges the parties to the conflict to de-escalate tensions and fully implement agreed conflict-prevention measures. I urge all concerned to show greater political will, so as not only to strengthen the ceasefire regime and implement previous commitments but also to renew a sustainable and comprehensive negotiating process.

The Transnistrian conflict in Moldova is also unresolved. The 5+2 process, led by the OSCE, has made some progress but more needs to be done in order to achieve a lasting settlement for the benefit of residents on both banks of the Dniester river. In the Western Balkans, the devastating conflicts of the 1990s have left a damaging legacy, where reconciliation and peacebuilding efforts are incomplete. It is crucial to guard against the erosion of the progress made over the past 20 years in Bosnia and Herzegovina and elsewhere. I urge continued efforts to promote the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Priština and to resolve the long-standing "name issue" between Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

The crises in Georgia in 2008 and in Ukraine in 2014 show that Europe remains at risk from new outbreaks of conflict. The United Nations fully supports the Geneva international discussions, which will soon enter their tenth year and urges the participants to demonstrate the political will to find creative solutions for the benefit of all. Some progress has recently been made, including on humanitarian issues, but much more should be done to resolve key peace and security issues. There is an urgent need for agreement on the non-use of force, the freedom of movement and internally displaced people.

The ongoing tragic conflict in Ukraine illustrates that localized violence has the potential to escalate into more serious confrontations. They can have geopolitical consequences that risk undermining regional and international peace and security. Direct challenges to national sovereignty and territorial integrity are reminders that we must collectively work to preserve and strengthen a rules-based international order so as to maintain peace and security, in accordance with the Charter.

In accordance with the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, the United Nations remains committed to supporting a peaceful resolution of the conflict, in a manner that fully upholds the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Ukraine. The United Nations fully supports the efforts within the Normandy Four, the Trilateral Contact Group, and the OSCE's Special Monitoring Mission, and has repeatedly called for the full implementation by all sides of all of their commitments under the Minsk process, both in letter and in spirit. We need an immediate and full ceasefire.

I take note of the Normandy format meeting on 18 February, endorsing the most recent ceasefire measures agreed by the Trilateral Contact Group effective yesterday, including the immediate withdrawal of heavy weaponry. I hope that that will finally translate into real progress towards peace, which is long overdue for the people of eastern Ukraine. I urge all sides to give the highest priority to protecting civilians.

In Ukraine and in all other conflicts, I urge all stakeholders to avoid unilateral steps or attempts to create facts on the ground, which further complicate and endanger efforts to find negotiated settlements. That is especially relevant in view of the latest actions taken in relation to the conflicts in eastern Ukraine and the South Caucasus. The international community must guard against such steps.

Conflict in Europe is not only a tragedy for those directly involved; those killed, injured or displaced, or who have lost loved ones, may be unable to access health care and are missing vital years of their education. It is also reversing development gains and preventing communities and societies from achieving their full potential and contributing to regional and global prosperity.

Economic progress and sustainable development are based on long-term stability, which, in turn, requires peace and security and respect for human rights. No single factor can be blamed for the emergence and continuation of conflicts in Europe. In many cases, peace agreements are simply not being implemented. Other factors include challenges to democratic governance and the rule of law, and the manipulation of ethnic, economic, religious and communal tensions for personal or political gain, fuelled in part by worsening geopolitical rivalries.

Whatever the causes may be, the inability of regional and international institutions, including our own, to prevent and resolve conflicts is seriously undermining their credibility and making it more difficult for them to succeed in the future. I call for honest reflection on this vicious cycle. And I encourage the States Members of the United Nations, the Council, regional mechanisms and all stakeholders to intensify their efforts to define a peace and security agenda aimed at addressing today's complex challenges. The status quo is not sustainable.

The United Nations has globally tried-and-tested tools, norms, agendas, lessons learned and best practices for mediation, the promotion of dialogue, early

warning and early action, preventing and resolving conflicts, and peacebuilding. They are readily available to Member States and regional mechanisms engaged in such efforts. I urge all those with influence to step up their efforts to resolve existing conflicts and to prevent tensions from escalating into new conflicts. That is essential for safeguarding stability and cooperation in Europe and beyond, based on mutual trust and respect. The United Nations and I, personally, stand ready to lend our support.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing. I fully share and support his point that the entire notion of frozen conflict is completely misleading.

I now give the floor to Mr. Zannier.

Mr. Zannier: Let me start out by expressing my heartfelt condolences to the Russian delegation for the passing away of Ambassador Vitaly Churkin. Ambassador Churkin, who I knew well from my time as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo, will be remembered and missed by many inside and outside this Chamber.

I would like to thank the Ukrainian presidency of the Security Council for the invitation to address members during today's open debate. As the Secretary-General pointed out, ensuring lasting peace and security in Europe remains a major objective of the United Nations. But it is also at the core of the mandate and activities of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). I am glad to say that both organizations are united in their shared priority to address conflict situations in a complementary and mutually reinforcing manner.

After the end of the Cold War, the promise of a common and indivisible security space from Vancouver to Vladivostok, outlined in the Charter of Paris for a New Europe, as well as in the Istanbul Charter, seemed within reach. The vision of a cooperative and rules-based order on the old continent appeared irreversible. Many across the Euro-Atlantic space looked to the OSCE with high hopes and great expectations. But the conflicts that followed the violent break-up of Yugoslavia and the dissolution of the Soviet Union shattered that emerging security paradigm. Borders shifted and re-emerged, dividing peoples and minorities, engendering crisis and human suffering, sowing mistrust and creating different threat perceptions. The dire consequences of those conflicts are still with us today.

Looking back, we must recognize today that the order that materialized after the end of the Cold War failed to bring about full stability or balance. Trust and confidence in East-West relations quickly faded. Where trust is lacking, it becomes difficult to predict State behaviour. That is especially true in times when uncertainty and lack of transparency are intentionally used as political tools.

The OSCE has been a primary actor in addressing conflicts in Europe throughout the last two decades. The organization was transformed in the wake of the optimism of the early 1990s and evolved again in response to the ensuing conflicts. It continues to change today in response to both traditional and emerging challenges, but the fundamental characteristics of the OSCE remain the same. It offers a genuinely holistic view of how different elements of security interact and must be addressed together. It can provide a bridge between sides that sometimes have radically different visions of what security means, and it continues to invest in efforts to prevent destabilization and conflict, and to deal with the consequences when they appear.

Throughout its history, the OSCE has played a clear and active role as a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. In some cases the relationship with United Nations structures has been explicit. The OSCE Mission in Kosovo was linked to resolution 1244 (1999) and was assigned the lead role in matters relating to institution-building and human rights, as a distinct but constituent component in the framework of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo. It had a clear lead in establishing key democratic institutions such as the Kosovo Judicial Institute, the Central Election Commission, the Ombudsperson and the Kosovo Police Service School. And it continues to play an active role today.

Since the first OSCE field operations were established, the Organization's role in south-eastern Europe has adapted and changed in response to changing needs and persistent challenges. This remains the region where the OSCE continues to maintain its largest field presence, which, along with the OSCE institutions, is operating for stability, dialogue and security. We have long focused on supporting election systems in which people have confidence, and on promoting peaceful inter-ethnic relations.

Today the OSCE also focuses on new areas, including youth. We need a new generation able to act as a positive force for change and stability; to question old, divisive messages; and to call for accountable and transparent Government and institutions. In south-eastern Europe, as elsewhere across the OSCE region, we face increasing threats from violent extremism, radicalization and terrorism. The challenge of countering these threats transcends old dividing lines and national interests. The OSCE will continue to work with a wide range of partners to support our participating States in confronting this challenge.

The crisis in and around Ukraine continues to be a major source of tension and instability in Europe. Sadly, it has marked the return of geopolitics on the OSCE agenda, and it is challenging our model of cooperation. Inter-State relations are now more than ever before governed by a zero-sum mentality that we hoped we had left behind. In too many parts of the OSCE region, we still find conflicts and competition continuing, re-emerging and developing, both locally and regionally.

Our swift and flexible response to the unfolding crisis in and around Ukraine in 2014 is the most visible example of the OSCE's ability to live up to its Chapter VIII responsibilities and to take collective action to address a crisis at both the political level and on the ground. We established and continue to run the Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) in Ukraine, that is larger than any mission we have run before. Although unarmed and civilian, the Mission is performing quasi-peacekeeping functions, such as monitoring and verifying the ceasefire and the withdrawal of heavy weapons. As such, it has broken new ground in the area of peace operations. I am pleased to highlight that the Mission has established productive working relationships with various United Nations bodies, including the Security Council. On a number of occasions, both the Chief Monitor in Ukraine, Ambassador Apakan, and the OSCE representative in the Trilateral Contact Group, Ambassador Sajdik, have briefed the Council.

However, progress towards a peaceful resolution continues to elude us. Despite the tremendous efforts to work for peace, recent increases in fighting remind us of the very real risk of escalation, and we are looking at the suffering of the populations affected by combat. The SMM remains closely involved in supporting adherence to a ceasefire and the implementation of the Minsk Agreements. In that connection, I must say that I am concerned by the recent announcement concerning Russian recognition of documents issued by the self-proclaimed republics, as this complicates implementation of the Minsk agreements.

The SMM cannot prevent ceasefire violations or force the withdrawal of weapons that have returned to the line of contact, with a view to ensuring the security and freedom of movement it needs to do its job. For that, we need the political engagement of the various sides and the international community. We are now monitoring the recently announced ceasefire, and we are ready to observe the much-needed withdrawal of heavy weapons — a key step towards de-escalation.

More generally, we are drawing on lessons from our current operation in Ukraine to develop a framework for future missions and crisis response. As the SMM moves into areas of work new to the OSCE, we have also appreciated the expertise and advice of the United Nations, not least on the use of technology, including unmanned aerial vehicles. Currently, we are in negotiations with the Department of Field Support to conclude an agreement in order to utilize United Nations system contracts and to purchase from the strategic deployment stocks in Brindisi. That agreement will be modelled on similar arrangements with the African Union, and we intend to conclude it soon.

Although the crisis in and around Ukraine continues to dominate the OSCE agenda, we should keep in mind the other protracted conflicts in the OSCE area. The OSCE has played an active role in their negotiating processes since the 1990s. We support and facilitate contacts through institutional support and the work of representatives of the annual OSCE chairmanship. That role is bolstered by the inclusive and consensus-based nature of the OSCE. As we step up efforts to prevent further crises and facilitate the resolution of protracted conflicts, the readiness of the parties to conflicts to take responsibility for resolving them remains key to breaking out of the current stalemates.

The Nagorno Karabakh conflict has seen a worrying deterioration on the ground. The hostilities that erupted in April 2016 contributed to the highest number of soldiers and civilians killed and wounded in a single year since the May 1994 ceasefire. The use of heavy weapons and the clear targeting of villages set a disturbing precedent. And the risk of further fighting remains high. The OSCE Minsk Group co-Chairs

continue to seek a way to retreat from violence and work towards a negotiated settlement. So far they have not been able to secure agreement to implement even modest confidence-building measures. Their work keeps a space open for discussions and helps to manage the conflict, but it is for the parties to choose to use that opportunity to take a step forward towards peace.

The Transnistrian settlement process may be less fraught with the risk of violence, but in this too we need a fresh determination to move forward. Last year Germany, as Chair of the OSCE, achieved renewed activity in the 5+2 format. The Berlin Protocol last June marked an encouraging commitment by the sides to work for agreements. We need to maintain and build on this momentum.

Following the conflict in 2008, we have not managed to return to our presence on the ground in Georgia. However, the OSCE's track record of strong relations with the United Nations and its agencies provides a solid basis for further development of our relationship. We work closely together with the United Nations and the European Union as co-chairs of the Geneva international discussions, and as co-facilitator of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism meetings in Ergneti. The OSCE also contributes to confidence-building in the region through targeted initiatives on the ground.

Secretary-General Guterres has sought to launch a surge in the diplomacy for peace and to adopt a comprehensive approach in conflict prevention that marries peace and security, sustainable development and human rights. I strongly support his initiative and look forward to working with him to achieve that. Effective conflict prevention and resolution require building strong coalitions, not only among international organizations, but also with civil society and the private sector. The inclusion of women in all stages of the conflict cycle is key. The OSCE has developed structures and policies to help its membership implement resolution 1325 (2000) and to ensure that women form a natural part of its peace-building efforts. We appreciate Secretary-General Guterres' interest in mediation and share his view of it as a priority. In particular, I look forward to his launch of the mediation initiative to enhance capacities both in the field and at Headquarters. We have pursued the same goals, within our modest resources, and I look forward to further developing cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations in this area.

The OSCE has already established a joint strategic work plan with the Department of Political Affairs, including an exchange of experts from our mediation roster and the United Nations Standby Team of Senior Mediation Advisers. There will certainly be lessons we can learn and share from the experiences of the United Nations and OSCE as we try to close the gap between early warning and early action.

The OSCE will continue to nurture and bolster this valuable relationship with the United Nations by making full use of the potential of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, which continues to be underutilized. During my tenure as OSCE Secretary General, I have strived to operationalize United Nations-OSCE cooperation, not only in mediation, conflict prevention and resolution, but also in other equally important areas, such as the fight against transnational threats or in the economic and environmental sphere. The establishment of the United Nations Liaison Office for Peace and Security in Vienna is a tangible outcome of these efforts.

Looking ahead, I would like to encourage the Secretary-General to pursue the practice of retreats with heads of regional organizations. In this connection, we could look into ways to establish a follow-up mechanism to exchange best practices and promote cooperation among regions in the field of conflict prevention and resolution. I am grateful for the opportunity to speak today and look forward to an interactive discussion.

The President: I thank Mr. Zannier for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Schmid.

Ms. Schmid: It is an honour to be here on behalf of the European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini. I would like to thank the Ukrainian presidency for convening this meeting.

Please allow me to start by expressing High Representative Mogherini's heartfelt condolences on the passing away of Ambassador Vitaly Churkin. He not only played a leading role on the Security Council for so many years, but he was also a very respected and important interlocutor for the European Union (EU) on the many issues that are of key interest to the Union at the United Nations. I was actually supposed to meet with him yesterday, and I was deeply shocked and saddened to learn the news upon arrival. We are left

with deep sorrow and our thoughts are with our Russian colleagues and in particular with his family.

For many of its citizens, the European Union remains a unique path to lasting peace, stability and prosperity. The continent has, however, not been immune to conflicts. I very much agree with the Secretary-General that we cannot take peace for granted. As conflicts grow more complex, our efforts to address them need to evolve. These efforts now involve action at multiple levels — local, regional and global — with a wide variety of stakeholders and across the conflict cycle, from early warning to conflict prevention, mediation, crisis management and post-conflict reconstruction.

This is why we so much welcome what the Secretary-General has said right from the beginning about his focus on conflict prevention and mediation. This goes hand in hand with the key objective of the European Union's global strategy, which is to address conflicts at an early stage while building the resilience of societies around us. I very much associate myself with Lamberto Zannier when he speaks about the need to include women in all stages of the conflict cycle.

Allow me to highlight the implementation of this approach by the European Union on the European continent.

First of all, promoting stability in the countries closest to the European Union in the western Balkans is a natural strategic priority. The accession perspective to the European Union has carved out a path to heal the wounds of the past and foster stability in the region. It has encouraged transformation and modernization among countries to whom we have given a firm commitment that their future lies within the European Union. At the same time, the region's fragilities deserve our continued attention. The Belgrade-Pristina dialogue, as facilitated by High Representative Mogherini, between the leaders of both sides has already led to substantial progress in the normalization of their relations.

Secondly, stabilization has been placed at the heart of the recently reviewed European neighbourhood policy in which the European Union offers further cooperation on civilian security sector reform, tackling terrorism and extremism, disrupting organized crime, strengthening cybersecurity and, last but not least, conflict prevention. Through the Eastern Partnership dimension of this policy, we are contributing to conflict resolution by focusing on the enhancement of our partners' resilience. This means taking new approaches, such as strengthening institutions and good governance, taking advantage of market opportunities, and enhancing mobility, people-to-people links and interconnectivity.

Thirdly, the European security order is firmly based on the principles of sovereignty, independence and the territorial integrity of States; the inviolability of borders; the peaceful settlement of disputes and the free choice of countries in deciding their own future. Unfortunately, these long-standing key principles of European security have not been respected. The crisis in and around Ukraine has demonstrated this. Our support for Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence is unwavering, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 68/262 of March 2014 and our fundamental principles. We continue to condemn and will not recognize the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol. European Union leaders have repeatedly made this very clear.

In accordance with resolution 2202 (2015), the EU remains firm in its call on all sides to swiftly and fully implement the Minsk agreements to pursue a sustainable political solution. We call in particular on Russia to use its influence with the separatists. The EU fully supports the efforts undertaken through the Normandy format, the Trilateral Contact Group and the presence of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The EU and its member States are the biggest contributors to the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, which is doing a very important job. The continued fighting and loss of life in eastern Ukraine demands redoubled efforts to fully implement the Minsk agreements. Let me also say, as was already stated by Lamberto Zannier, that measures, including those recently taken, that increase tensions and are not in the spirit of the agreements must be avoided. As High Representative Mogherini has stated, the EU stands ready to increase its support for the implementation of the Minsk agreements.

Fourthly, unresolved conflicts pose an obstacle to peace, stability and regional development and require a consolidated effort to manage and resolve. The EU supports a peaceful settlement of the Transnistrian conflict that is based on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova with a special status for Transnistria. In that regard, we remain committed to active involvement in the settlement process within the 5+2 agenda in order to support the efforts of the Chair in Office of the OSCE in Europe.

In Georgia the EU's Monitoring Mission ensures respect for the ceasefire at the line of control with the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia is tasked with engaging with all stakeholders on measures aimed at peaceful conflict resolution. Our cooperation with the United Nations and the OSCE is particularly advanced in that area.

On the unresolved Nagorno Karabakh conflict, our Special Representative supports and complements the OSCE Minsk Group and its co-Chairs, while, at the same time, the EU also supports civil society and promotes peacebuilding activities across the conflict divide.

Finally, we are witnessing history in the making in Cyprus as the United Nations-facilitated talks between the two Cypriot leaders reach their end game. Never has a settlement been so close. The EU has a special role to play, because a future united Cyprus will be a member of the European Union. We are represented at the highest level in the Conference on Cyprus in Geneva, with both President Juncker and High Representative Mogherini personally engaged and committed.

To conclude, let me reiterate that the European Union will continue to be a first supporter of the multilateral approach and a strong United Nations, and will remain a very reliable and predictable partner in striving for common ground and win-win solutions in crises that are otherwise difficult to solve.

The President: I thank Ms. Schmid for her briefing.

I shall now make as statement in my capacity as Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine.

Last week I was in Munich. The annual Security Conference was, as usual, a lively event with discussions on issues of global consequence, but one issue was definitely at centre stage — security in Europe. In my many previous encounters there, I have rarely experienced the level of concern that was expressed this year. The age of détente and the common purpose of making our continent a safer place appear to be in great danger right now.

How did we get to this point? It did not happen overnight. We have travelled — and sometimes it has felt as though we have sleep-walked — down a long and difficult road to reach today's state of affairs in Europe. I do not believe that conflicts in Europe have received the attention that they deserve. Given the shock waves that European conflicts can send around the globe, with grave implications for international security and stability, the situation in Europe needs to be redressed. As events over the past decade have demonstrated, ignoring conflicts in Europe and failing to learn from them are no longer an option. We need to put security in Europe back into the focus of the Security Council.

The Ukrainian presidency has convened this open debate so as to address the fundamental challenge facing Europe. Our world has become dangerously insecure, and that trend is developing further. If we do not adequately respond, the rapidly evolving crisis may bring us to a position where it will be impossible to implement one of the most important commitments that we have as United Nations Member States, namely, to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. Strong institutions and shared standards and principles were supposed to serve as effective safeguards for the international security order. Peaceful inter-State dialogue based on the sovereign right of every State to choose its own destiny and on respect for human rights are the core elements. Today, both of those pillars are being consistently undermined.

Transatlantic unity has made Europe a security role model and a crucial contributor to global efforts to ensure stability and security. Global security has always been underpinned by European security. Having been the cradle of two world wars, Europe has evolved to become a champion of security across the globe. But now we find that Europe is once again itself under threat. In recent decades Europe has faced a number of conflicts.

The unresolved conflicts facing Europe have one common feature — the active involvement of Russia in particular. A strategy of instigating, participating in, supporting and then derailing instead of mediating has been used by Russia to create a number of volatile hotspots across the continent. They can be activated whenever Russia decides that it is in its interest to do so. If that kind of aggression goes unchecked, every protracted conflict could become a hot one, while the aggressor State continues to create new threats and challenges in other places.

The fundamental problem facing the United Nations in that connection is that the architect of that strategy is sitting at this table as a permanent member of the Security Council. Bearing the solemn responsibility to maintain peace and security, Russia has resorted

instead to violating agreed documents that were drawn up actually as foundation stones for peace, namely the Charter of the United Nations, the Charter of Paris for a New Europe and the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, known as the Helsinki Final Act.

The Russian aggression against Georgia in 2008 became a litmus test for European security. It was a warning sign that was not heeded. The aggressor was just slapped on the wrist by the international community and took that reaction as a green light. Today, the answer is obvious: we have not learned well enough. The appeasement of aggressors and the lack of consequences merely encourage more aggression. Since 2014, Russia has vigorously implemented that strategy in Ukraine. Ukraine is enduring direct military aggression, as illustrated by the illegal partial occupation of Crimea and part of the Donbas.

Yesterday marked exactly three years since Russia illegally occupied Crimea, thereby violating the Budapest Memorandum, which Russia signed and which also guaranteed Ukrainian security. At the same time, Russia unveiled to the world its strategy of hybrid warfare combining military action with concerted and well-funded propaganda throughout the world. Following Ukraine's unprecedented act of unilateral nuclear disarmament in 1994, more disastrous results for Ukraine could hardly have been envisaged. To date, 10,000 people have been killed and more than 22,000 wounded in the Donbas, and Crimea has become a grey zone marred by injustice, terror and repression. The occupying authorities commit systematic violations of human rights and seek to destroy the identity of Ukrainians and the indigenous people of the peninsula, namely, the Crimean Tatars.

The European security system, which was considered as one of the most stable, has now been put seriously in doubt. A peaceful, democratic and strong Europe is a significant contributor to global peace efforts, but now the continent's own security has been damaged by frozen conflicts and acts of aggression. Today, the global and European order based on the rule of law has reached a tipping point. There are two options: either allow the destabilization to increase or rally the international community around efforts to strengthen institutions and the United Nations Charter, thereby ensuring full adherence to international law.

Russian aggression against Ukraine targets European and transatlantic unity, which are basic elements of the global security order. Reversing the breakup of the Soviet Union, which took place a quarter of a century ago, has been a kind of obsession for the Kremlin for a long time. Russia exploits weaknesses, particularly institutional weakness, by abusing its right of veto at the Security Council and the consensus rule in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). An effective mechanism to hold the wrongdoer responsible for its violations has not yet been consolidated.

In times of systemic crisis and geopolitical uncertainty, we require strong institutions that protect international law, a cornerstone of our understanding of the world order. Only strong institutions — the Security Council first of all — can provide international security. We urgently need to reform the Security Council in order to remove veto-power abuses. The Security Council should be capable of efficiently addressing conflicts, regardless of the possibility of a permanent member being a party to the conflict. It is no longer acceptable that paragraph 3 of Article 27 of the Charter of the United Nations — which states that "a party to a dispute shall abstain from voting" — continues to be blatantly ignored. It is imperative that clear proceedings be introduced for the proper implementation of that Article.

Europe has a central role to play in the global quest for sustainable peace. However, as Europeans, we must put our own house in order first. We hope that sustainable peace in Europe will start with Ukraine, but other conflicts cannot be forgotten. We believe that the existing situation in Europe is not a deadlock and that protracted and active conflicts in Europe can be effectively resolved and potential tensions prevented.

The United Nations should not shy away from taking a more proactive approach in conflict management and resolution. However, the Organization is only as strong as its Members want it to be. Therefore, in order to take necessary action, the United Nations needs the support and political will of its Members. When that exists, the United Nations can do its job. We may recall examples of preventive deployment in the Western Balkans that helped avert a spillover of violence. In the Baltics, good offices and fact-finding missions of the Secretary-General facilitated the orderly withdrawal of Russian troops from the region and helped avoid polarization on various controversial issues. Ukraine

therefore believes that the Secretary-General should act proactively in situations related to conflict prevention and management.

We fully agree with the Secretary-General that the Council needs to make greater use of the options laid out in Chapter VI of the Charter. In our opinion, that is the way out of the deadlocks we have in the negotiations processes around Europe.

We are encouraged by the Secretary-General's expressed readiness to support the Members through the use of his good offices and through his personal engagement. The Secretary-General should also not shy away from bringing to the attention of the Security Council any dangerous developments, as envisaged by Article 99 of the Charter. Neither of these tools was used in 2008 or 2014 by the previous Secretary-General.

We believe that the United Nations should take more initiative in providing options for conflict resolution, including through possible political and security presences and through methods of cooperation with regional organizations. As the first step in that direction, the Secretary-General could elaborate options for a political and security presence of the United Nations in Ukraine and ways that the United Nations might cooperate with the OSCE in order to ensure the full implementation of resolution 2202 (2015).

Like no other region, Europe has powerful regional and subregional organizations, and they must be used. However, all participants must work together. The OSCE, the European Union and NATO have proven their capacity to deal with conflict management and post-conflict situations in Europe. The experience gained through joint work during conflict management in the former Yugoslavia and elsewhere in the world now needs to be applied to other areas of Europe.

We also believe that it is worth reflecting on the existing experience of conflict resolution in other regions. For example, the establishment of a Security Council ad hoc working group on conflict prevention and resolution in Europe — similar but not identical to the approach that deals with conflicts in Africa — could increase the focus of the Council on conflicts in Europe. It could also provide assessments of the implementation of resolutions and make recommendations as to how to improve cooperation among the United Nations and the OSCE, the European Union and other regional organizations.

I would be very grateful to United Nations Members for their input and suggestions on these issues during today's discussion. It is the right time to carry out such work. It is also the right time to open a fresh chapter in European history, a Europe once again characterized by peace and progress. Let us begin this work now.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to the other members of the Council.

Mrs. Haley (United States of America): I thank Foreign Minister Klimkin for chairing this important and timely open debate. I would also like to thank Secretary-General Guterres, Secretary General Zannier and Secretary General Schmid for their comprehensive briefings.

It can be tempting to take Europe's peace and security for granted. Europe is a continent of strong, stable democracies. Europe is a continent of flourishing economies that benefit from close cooperation. However, Europe faces serious challenges, most acute of which are Russia's attempts to destabilize Ukraine and infringe upon Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The United States is committed to the institutions that help keep Europe safe. We will not waver in our support for NATO, which is the strongest alliance in history. We are working to make NATO even more effective, deepening cooperation among existing members and keeping the door open to new allies who fulfill the requirements for membership, all while seeking to increase burden-sharing. In addition, NATO is providing training and assistance to build the defensive capabilities of Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova.

The United States also supports the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which helps to resolve Europe's conflicts. Right now, for example, the OSCE is playing a crucial role: observing and monitoring the situation in eastern Ukraine. The bonds of the United States with NATO and the OSCE have stood the test of time. They are institutions that bring together partners on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean in order to defend our shared ideals.

The partnership of the United States with the European Union (EU) is deep and enduring. The EU binds together countries that believe deeply in the cause of democracy, human rights and economic freedom. It has made Europe more prosperous and more peaceful.

The United States looks forward to improving our cooperation with the EU. The United States may, from time to time, disagree with the perspectives of the EU, as friends do. However, it remains an important partner. At the end of the day, no one should misinterpret occasional policy differences and debates as a signal of anything less than total commitment to our alliances in Europe. That commitment is strong.

More than three years ago, the Ukrainian people took to the streets to speak out against political oppression and corruption. Those protestors demanded freedom, democracy and respect for the rule of law and they succeeded in creating a new Ukraine. The United States continues to stand with the Ukrainian people. But Russia has tried to prevent the change that the Ukrainian people demanded. Russia occupied Crimea and attempted to annex that piece of Ukrainian territory, an act that the United States does not recognize. Russia then armed, financed and organized separatist forces in eastern Ukraine, leading to a devastating and senseless conflict that has cost more than 10,000 lives. The scenes of destruction in the town of Avdiivka in recent weeks show the consequences of Russia's ongoing interference in Ukraine. Russia's recognition in recent days of purported passports and other illegitimate documents distributed by Russian-backed separatists in Ukraine's Donetsk and Luhansk regions is another direct challenge to efforts to bring peace to eastern Ukraine.

The United States believes that it is possible to have a better relationship with Russia — after all, we confront many of the same threats — but greater cooperation with Russia cannot come at the expense of the security of our European friends and allies. That is why the United States calls on Russia to respect Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. That is why we continue to urge Russia to show a commitment to peace by fully implementing the commitments made under the Minsk agreements and ending its occupation of Crimea. The United States and the EU remain united in that approach, keeping sanctions in place until Moscow fully honours its Minsk commitments. Our separate, Crimea-related sanctions will remain in place until Russia returns control over the peninsula to Ukraine.

Elsewhere in Europe, there are still significant political and development challenges to overcome. Georgia's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders must be affirmed and respected. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the country's people are still waiting for their leaders to stop playing politics with ethnic divisions and to focus instead on rooting out corruption and building a more stable future. In Cyprus, leaders are working to end the long-standing division of the island in order to achieve a settlement, which the United States strongly supports.

With regard to the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, the United States remains committed to the Minsk Group process for advancing a peaceful and lasting settlement, and we call on the sides to respect the ceasefire, implement agreed-on confidence-building measures and resume negotiations. In Moldova, the United States also continues to support a comprehensive settlement of the Transnistria conflict that affirms Moldova's sovereignty and territorial integrity while providing special status for Transnistria. And in Kosovo, while more must be done to strengthen governance and the rule of law, the United States believes that the international community must recognize the great strides that Kosovo has made since it became independent. It deserves to take its rightful place in the international community of nations, including as a full member of the United Nations.

The United States will remain Europe's strongest partner in promoting peace and prosperity. We will stand by the institutions and alliances that make us all more secure, and the deep ties that connect the United States and Europe will enable us to rise to the challenges we face today and to overcome them together.

Ms. Söder (Sweden): I would like to begin by thanking the Ukrainian presidency for organizing today's important debate on conflicts in Europe. I am grateful to the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, and Secretary General Zannier, of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), for their briefings, and I also align myself with the statement delivered by my friend and colleague, Ms. Helga Schmid, Secretary-General of the European External Action Service of the European Union (EU), as well as that to be delivered later on behalf of the Nordic countries.

The European Union, of which Sweden is a proud member, has been the single-most important institutional source of peace and stability in Europe since the end of the Second World War. With its vision of a Europe whole and free, based on democratic values

and shared economic prosperity, the EU has been a vital mechanism for conflict prevention on a continent where two world wars originated and where millions of people paid with their lives for the freedom that we enjoy today. The EU partnership with its neighbours in support of democracy, prosperity and human rights has never been a zero-sum game to the detriment of relations with other countries. On the contrary, deepened cooperation with external partners is encouraged. In the western Balkans, for example, the Security Council has gradually handed over to the EU its responsibilities for peacebuilding and security in countries that were once subject to large United Nations operations. Sweden believes that the more inclusive the EU is, the more stable and prosperous our continent becomes.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe is a transatlantic body that offers a unique platform for dialogue on European peace and security, precisely because it is based on commonly agreed-on principles and commitments. Only when the OSCE principles, which are the foundation of the European security order, are fully respected can we achieve lasting security and stability. The OSCE is a vital contributor to sustaining peace in line with United Nations efforts to that end, and confidence-building measures and arms control should now be enhanced again, because a comprehensive concept of security remains a strength and added value of the OSCE and must be upheld.

Respect for democracy, the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms remains a precondition for our common security. The OSCE's human dimension and autonomous institutions — the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the Representative on Freedom of the Media and the High Commissioner on National Minorities — should be allowed to play their full role. They are key assets across the conflict cycle and today are needed more than ever as we try to prevent armed conflict. The mandates and budgets of those institutions must be preserved and strong candidates selected to lead them.

Sweden is a militarily non-aligned country. As such, our own security depends on a rule-based international order under which the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, large and small, are respected everywhere, globally. Our long-standing commitment to multilateral cooperation and our staunch defence of international law are rooted in that realization. It is therefore with great concern that we note that Europe is currently facing the most serious challenges to its security since the end of the Cold War. As we speak, the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, which has already cost some 10,000 lives, is causing inhuman suffering for large groups of innocent civilians. When one State decides to use military force to invade and annex a part of another State and threaten its sovereignty, that is a threat to us all. That is why the European Union has so clearly and unequivocally condemned those breaches of international law and attempts to undermine the rule-based international order and European security order, as enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act, the Paris Charter and the Budapest Memorandum, and in accordance with the rules and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

I would like to point to some specific areas that require immediate action and joint efforts on the part of the members of the Council and other relevant regional actors — the EU, the OSCE and others — in order to secure Europe's future as a continent of peace and prosperity and to accord with Chapter VIII of the Charter. We must ensure that an end is brought to the Russian aggression against Ukraine — as demonstrated in its violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and integrity and its illegal annexation of Crime and Sevastopol — through implementation of the Minsk process, with deliberations in the Normandy format, and through a decrease in violence.

We must act in a manner that is conducive to long-term stability in the Balkans, and uphold and strengthen the EU enlargement policy. We must commit to efforts to move the promising Cyprus peace process forward. We must resolve the so-called protracted conflicts in Georgia, Moldova and Nagorno Karabakh, without delay and in accordance with international law. We must recognize the importance of peace and security of the EU Eastern Partnership, strengthen the European instruments for confidence- and security-building measures and convential arms control through the OSCE, actively engage in disarmament to rid the world of nuclear weapons, and involve women as actors in all of this. By supporting these goals, we will not only buttress peace and stability in Europe, but also show that the elected and permanent members of the Security Council are committed to defending the rules and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and our commitment to common gains and security.

Mr. Vassilenko (Kazakhstan) (*spoke in French*): I join previous speakers in thanking the Ukrainian

presidency, through you, Mr. Foreign Minister, for organizing today's debates.

I would also like to express the gratitude of the entire Kazakh delegation to the briefers for their far-reaching briefings.

(*spoke in English*)

We fully support the agenda and priorities of Secretary-General António Guterres on the prevention of conflicts, which is more effective than crisis management. My country stands united with the international community in efforts to strengthen the work of the United Nations and the Security Council. We support Member States in our common efforts to constructively transform conflict into peace, advance security and development, protect human rights and promote the rule of law.

The European security environment has changed dramatically in recent years. Stability on the continent has been impacted by contemporary security challenges, including unconventional terrorism, irregular migration and organized crime, such as arms and drugs trafficking, as well as trafficking in persons. Last but not least is the expanding atmosphere of fear and distrust. All of those affect negatively both the social and political structure of European societies, as well as international peace and security, and challenge our common fundamental values and principles.

In his address to the General Assembly at its seventieth session, the President of Kazakhstan, Mr. Nursultan Nazarbayev, said:

> "Humankind needs to shift its focus from routine conflict prevention and post-conflict rehabilitation to a new development strategy that would make such conflicts meaningless." (*A/70/PV.13, p. 47*)

To that end, Kazakhstan has consistently advanced an international agenda that seeks to help resolve conflicts before they arise and, if that is no longer possible, to mediate between conflicting parties with the aim of creating conditions for lasting peace. Our efforts, through hosting several international meetings in Astana and Almaty on Syria and Iran's nuclear programme, which have a direct bearing on security in Europe, are a case in point. I would like to take this opportunity to inform the Security Council that the most recent meeting of the Astana process on Syria ended with a decision on the modalities of the joint operational group to monitor the ceasefire. We are prepared to continue offering the Astana platform in search of lasting solutions to this conflict.

Kazakhstan has always been and will continue to be a strong advocate for peace and security, both globally and in our own region. Thus, in 2010, thanks to President Nazarbayev's personal engagement, following a major upheaval, it was possible to stabilize the situation in our brotherly neighbour Kyrgyzstan. Our approach, based on seeking mutual understanding and restoring trust among nations, was perhaps most notable during our chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2010.

At the Astana Summit of the OSCE in 2010, all of its participating States recommitted themselves to

> "the vision of a free, democratic, common and indivisible Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community stretching from Vancouver to Vladivostok, rooted in agreed principles, shared commitments and common goals".

That commitment is as critical and relevant now as it was then, and Kazakhstan remains strongly committed to strengthening the OSCE further in order to help the organization better meet the swiftly changing challenges of our times.

The position of my country regarding conflicts in Europe that, unfortunately, continue to take place without durable solutions, is well known. Kazakhstan maintains friendly relations with all the countries involved in those conflicts, without exception. With respect to virtually all of them, we have both bilateral and multilateral formats of mutually beneficial cooperation within integration initiatives and regional organizations. That is why we believe that the Astana platform can serve as a much-needed additional venue for restoring confidence and reconfirming commitment to the basic principles of international law and respect for the national interests of the parties involved.

The peaceful resolution of conflicts in Europe requires practical action at several levels: between major Powers, regionally and locally. It is also important that the Security Council and other partners redouble their efforts to forge political agreements.

Bringing an end to the conflict in eastern Ukraine should be our utmost common priority. Our President has consistently worked to help put an end to hostilities, contributing to the eventual conclusion

of the Minsk Agreements. We have repeatedly called for strict compliance with resolution 2202 (2015) on those agreements, which we consider the only viable existing mechanism for the resolution of the conflict in a peaceful way. We welcome the results of the Trilateral Contact Group's meeting in Minsk on 15 February, as well as the most recent announcement on 18 February of an agreement to implement a ceasefire.

It is of special importance for our multi-ethnic country that Ukraine remains sovereign, stable and independent, with diverse multi-ethnic and multi-confessional society in which all human rights are upheld. We believe that the full-fledged normalization of the situation in that country can be achieved only with economic recovery. We therefore call for the establishment of confidence-building measures in the economic dimension. We certainly should not allow a further escalation of tensions.

Regarding the situation in Georgia and the Nagorno Karabakh issue, we call on the OSCE to redouble its efforts — which we stand ready to help — to achieve progress towards their resolution through diplomatic ways.

Kazakhstan further welcomes the ongoing dialogue on Cyprus, which sends a strong message and much hope that the parties will come to a possible agreement to reunite the country. We believe that the role of the Secretary-General and the unity shown by the members of the Security Council at this delicate stage of peace negotiations are of crucial importance to reaching the eventual solution of the Cyprus issue.

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina also needs the continued attention of the Security Council. Our priorities in that direction should be to keep promoting dialogue between the parties, confidence-building measures in the political-military, economic-environmental and human dimensions, in compliance with resolution 2315 (2016).

With regard to developments in the further implementation of resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999), the Council should promote further the dialogue process between the parties to the conflict, under European Union auspices, so as to maintain peace and security.

In his policy address at the beginning of our country's membership of the Council, our President stressed Kazakhstan's determination to work with fellow members to promote consensus to strengthen peace and security. As he said, progress through preventive diplomacy, democratic processes, arms control, confidence- and security-building measures, the promotion of human rights, and security in the economic and environmental dimensions lie at the heart of Kazakhstan's vision for effective global security and safety.

I would also like to call the attention of the Chamber to the manifesto of President Nazarbayev, entitled "The world, the twenty-first century" (S/2016/317, annex). This is an official document of the Security Council, and it sets out a step-by-step plan for ending conflicts and violence. It also attaches strong importance to the strengthening of the United Nations through enhanced cooperation among collective regional security organizations in Europe, the Americas, Asia and Africa, as well as a determined focus on achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

With this in mind, I hope that our discussions today will provide positive food for thought for all of us taking part and galvanize the efforts of the global community to end conflicts and promote peace.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I should like to begin by warmly thanking the Secretaries-General of the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OECD) and the European External Action Service of the European Union for their very enlightening briefings.

The theme of conflicts in Europe has a special resonance for my country, which has twice been at the heart of world conflicts, the outbreak of which occurred on the European continent. With this painful legacy, France is all the more attached to the preservation of peace and security in Europe, as well as to the instruments we have collectively put in place to defend them and to prevent the resurgence of the horrors of war. I am thinking in particular of the Charter of the United Nations and its principles concerning the peaceful resolution of conflicts and respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States; the Helsinki agreements and the recognition by all the OECD countries of the inviolability of the borders of Europe and the multidimensional dimension of security; and the European Union and the building of a common destiny among all its members.

Recent history, however, shows us that we cannot, either today or yesterday, consider the maintenance

of peace and security in Europe as a given. The annexation of the Crimea and the conflict in the Donbas unfortunately illustrate the fact that the violation of the territorial integrity of a European State is still possible. The persistence of so-called frozen conflicts in Nagorno Karabakh, Transnistria and Georgia poses an ongoing threat to the security of the countries concerned and their regions. Recent tensions in the Balkans are a cause for genuine concern. Finally, the lack of a settlement of the issue of Cyrpus — a country within the European Union — remains a source of great dissatisfaction.

Yet today we have the tools necessary to ensure peace and security on the European continent. Above all, in Europe as in the rest of the world, the Council has primary responsibility for the maintenance of peace and international security. It is important for everyone to assume their responsibilities so that it can fully exercise its prerogatives on European issues, which unfortunately has not always been the case in recent months. The Secretary-General is, we believe, fully justified in reminding the Security Council of its obligations and responsibilities when he deems it necessary.

The OSCE is an active and effective organization that has, inter alia, demonstrated its ability to rise to the challenge by playing a central role in managing the crisis in Ukraine. It is important to respect the mandates that has been assigned to it.

Finally, the European Union is today an essential player in the multipolar world and a pillar of multilateralism, whose community of values and interests shared with the United Nations is comprehensive. Its leading role in stabilizing its direct neighbourhood must be fully recognized and supported.

Strengthened by these powerful and adapted tools, we must maintain our mobilization to make the whole of Europe a stable, peaceful and conflict-free continent.

In Ukraine, we are tirelessly pursuing, alongside our German partners, our mediation efforts in the Normandy format in support of the full implementation of the Minsk accords, which we all agree to be the sole avenue to a peaceful resolution of the conflict. The renewed tensions over the past few weeks, particularly around the town of Avdiivka, are a cause of great concern to us, particularly as a result of the resurgence of civilian and military casualties and the deterioration of the humanitarian situation. We also regret the decision of the Russian authorities to recognize official documents issued by the de facto authorities of certain zones in the Donetsk and Lugansk regions, which runs counter to the spirit of the Minsk accords.

The ministerial meeting in Normandy format held on Saturday in Munich made it possible to agree on specific commitments whose aim is to promote a rapid improvement of the situation on the ground. These commitments include the effective implementation of the ceasefire and the withdrawal of heavy weapons, the disengagement of forces and the guarantee of unrestricted access to OSCE observers. The French, German, Ukrainian and Russian Ministers also supported the rapid exchange of prisoners and the guarantee of access to places of detention by the International Committee of the Red Cross. It is essential that these measures be implemented in a comprehensive and timely manner and we count on the support unanimous support of the Council to that end.

Discussions are continuing within the Normandy format to quickly adopt a road map, as foreseen by the Heads of State and Government. Our shared conviction with Germany remains that the only way forward is to advance concomitantly on the security and political aspects of the Minsk accords. We remain more determined than ever to pursue our common efforts within the Normandy format, because each result obtained on the ground counts and because today we have no alternative solution to support the implementation of the agreements Minsk. The European sanctions put in place at the beginning of the crisis are linked to the full implementation of the latter. Finally, I reiterate our commitment to defending the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. I recall that France strongly condemns and does not recognize the illegal annexation of the Crimea and Sevastopol.

In Georgia and Moldova, we support the search for solutions to frozen conflicts, while respecting the territorial integrity of those States. We are convinced of the central role of the OSCE in preventing any escalation on the ground and allowing for a lasting settlement through negotiations in the framework of the Geneva international discussions for Georgia and the so-called 5+2 process for Moldova.

With regard to Nagorno Karabakh, France is fully committed to the mediation of the OSCE Minsk Group. As co-Chair of the Group, our country is resolved to work with its Russian and American partners to ensure respect for the ceasefire, the establishment of

confidence-building measures on the ground and the resumption of political negotiations as soon as possible, which is the only way to achieve a peaceful and lasting solution to the conflict.

In the Balkans, the European Union plays a lead role in promoting the normalization of relations among neighbouring countries and reducing internal tensions among communities. In Kosovo and Serbia, the prospect of rapprochement with the European Union and the Union-facilitated dialogue today constitutes the main vector for the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina and the benefits that accompany this process for the daily life of the people. The effective implementation of the agreements concluded and the effective mobilization of the Serb and Kosovar leaders to that end are essential to ensuring that the important results of recent years are not jeopardized by the recent episodes of tensions.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is also the prospect of rapprochement with the European Union, through the implementation of the Reform Agenda, that is today the main factor for cohesion among communities. It is for all these reasons that France favours the European perspective for the Balkans, as we recalled at the Paris summit on 4 July. That perspective is, in our view, the main stabilizing force in the region.

In Cyprus, despite recent bottlenecks, significant progress has been made in recent months in the conduct of negotiations. The two sides have never gotten this far. Much remains to be done, however, in order to arrive at a lasting solution, the outlines of which must be in line with Security Council resolutions, the principles of the Charter and the community acquis. The urgent need now is to relaunch the negotiations by maintaining the momentum generated in recent months and by continuing to make progress on sensitive and important issues, including security questions.

In conclusion, Europe now has all the tools necessary to ensure peace and security on its continent, but it is only through the common mobilization of the various actors that we will be able to perpetuate the European dream born in 1945, in the aftermath of the war, of a continent at peace at the heart of the contemporary multilateral system, capable of promoting peace throughout the world.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the delegation of Ukraine for convening this meeting and you, Mr. Minister, for your personal participation in leading this debate.

I also thank Secretary-General Guterres for his detailed briefing, as well as Ms. Schmidt and Mr. Zannier for their statements.

Uruguay is a country that is firmly committed to multilateralism, the peaceful solution of disputes and the validity of international law. We are founding Members of the United Nations and our continent is one where 35 countries proudly live in peace and where one of those countries — Colombia — serves as a true example to the international community by engaging in a domestic peace process in which the parties involved have demonstrated that it is possible to achieve peace if you have the courage to invest your entire political capital therein.

From our point of view, conflicts in Europe pose an ongoing risk given the possibility of their worsening or transnationalization, to which we must add new threats such as cybercrime and violent extremism, among other factors. As the Secretary-General said just a few minutes ago, the idea of frozen conflicts is completely erroneous.

Nonetheless, these conflicts also offer an opportunity to reach negotiated solutions, hence the crucial importance of the roles of the Security Council and the Secretary-General and of the follow-up carried out in various respects by the General Assembly, despite the challenges and constraints that the Organization often faces. The interaction between the United Nations and the various regional monitoring bodies and mechanisms, as well as international mediation, are aspects that should be strengthened.

In this regard, it is important to mention the 1995 Dayton Agreement, the Geneva dialogue on the question of Georgia, the 2015 Minsk agreements and the work of the Normandy Quartet and the Trilateral Contact Group, as well as the ongoing dialogue on the reunification of Cyprus.

On this latter point, I would like to make a slight digression here to emphasize the importance of the negotiations conducted by the Cypriot leaders under the auspices of the Special Adviser, Mr. Espen Eide, and to highlight once again the firm commitment that we have seen to date and which we hope will continue, thereby making it possible to overcome the recent setback in the negotiations. The Cypriot process, like

the Colombia process, is an example of a situation in which the parties assume the leadership of the peace process and display the values enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

Sustainable peace can be achieved only through political solutions. The preventive approach has proved crucial in order to avoid the high cost of war, and in this respect it is imperative to prevent bureaucratic obstacles from arising and achieve greater system-wide cooperation from a human rights perspective first of all.

In this regard, I would like to emphasize the importance of the performance of and coordination among the various mechanisms of the international human rights system. Uruguay's approach attaches priority to the human rights of populations in conflict. We underscore that it is crucial to eliminate any limitation on free and unrestricted access by the staff of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights as well as by international agencies, bodies and organizations, with a view to monitoring, reporting on and addressing the concerns of the populations affected.

Uruguay takes note of reports on cases of human rights violations, including reports of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Secretary-General, which stress accusations of killings, arbitrary detention, torture and ill-treatment, refugee rights, impunity for crimes of sexual violence, and the need to clarify cases of forced disappearance, among other aspects.

My country believes that in all cases the human rights track should move in parallel and independently of political negotiations, and that all stakeholders must impartially and consistently uphold human rights law, the norms of international humanitarian law and refugee law, which form the basis of our universal system.

We deem it crucial for the positive development of conflicts in Europe that all parties refrain from carrying out any acts that could jeopardize ongoing negotiations. The primary responsibility for conflict prevention and the protection of local populations lies with States themselves, despite the fact that the Security Council, the United Nations and the international community, through their close scrutiny and impartial action, legitimized by the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, also have a role to play that should continue to evolve. The challenge must be met by every country and all those who make up the Organization.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): We wish to thank the Ukrainian presidency for having decided to convene this open debate on conflicts in Europe. This is obviously a very relevant topic, as is clear from the various high-level debates on the issue and the robust recommendations emanating from the 2017 Munich Security Conference, which ended just a few days ago.

I should like also to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres; Mr. Lamberto Zannier, Secretary General of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe; and Ms. Helga Schmid, Secretary General of the European Union's European External Action Service, for their outstanding briefings.

With an increasingly sophisticated peace and security architecture, as described by the briefers in great detail, and in spite of 70 years of relative stability and economic prosperity, the European continent continues to be rocked by various disputes, both intra- and inter-State, which threaten international peace and security. This is because, as the Secretary-General has reiterated, so-called frozen conflicts in Europe, as they continue to lack a definitive solution, could erupt at any time.

To the unresolved conflicts in Cyprus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Nagorno Karabakh, Kosovo, Georgia and in eastern Ukraine, we must add emerging threats such as terrorism, violent extremism, transnational crime and cybercrime, as well as increasing xenophobia and religious intolerance.

We believe that the number and complexity of crises on the European continent requires close cooperation between the United Nations and its various partners, first and foremost regional organization, which play a crucial role in the maintenance of international peace and security, as set out in the Charter of the United Nations in its Chapter VIII.

Former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon rightly emphasized in August 2015 that the United Nations increasingly shared with regional organizations responsibility for the maintenance of peace and security. That is why we welcome the existence of the various regional organizations that play a part in the resolution of conflicts on the European continent, including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the European Union, which play a leading role.

My delegation deems it important to continue to reflect on the best way to strengthen cooperation

between the United Nations, starting with the Security Council, and European regional organizations, in the spirit of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations and of the close cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union.

In this regard, Mr. President, we believe that the suggestion you just made regarding the creation of a working group on the prevention of conflicts in Europe is deserving of consideration.

Mr. Arancibia Fernández (Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Plurinational State of Bolivia thanks the Ukrainian presidency for its initiative to hold this open debate today in order to address the issue of international peace and security in Europe. Similarly, we would like to thank for their statements the Secretary-General, António Guterres; Mr. Lamberto Zannier, Secretary General of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe; and Ms. Helga Schmid, Secretary General of the European Union's European External Action Service.

For Bolivia, conflicts between or within States must be handled in strict compliance with the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, which all States Members of the United Nations have agreed to comply with faithfully, in particular the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes.

With regard to conflicts between States, Bolivia stresses the importance of the obligation of all States to observe, respect, implement and comply with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter. Given that requirement, it is necessary to encourage and support States and regional and subregional organizations, and all parties involved in any type of conflict, to reach peaceful solutions to conflicts through dialogue, consultation, good offices, mediation and negotiation. It is also important to respect the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of States, as well as the principle of the non-threat and non-use of force in resolving conflicts.

With respect to internal conflicts within States, Bolivia believes that if they do not constitute a threat to or a breach of international peace and security, the Security Council should strictly apply what is established in Article 2, paragraphs 4 and 7, of the United Nations Charter on the principle of non-interference, and act in accordance with General Assembly resolution 2131 (XX) of 1965, entitled "Declaration on the Inadmissibility of Intervention in the Domestic Affairs of States and the Protection of their Independence and Sovereignty", which prohibits both armed aggression and direct and indirect intervention or interference in the sovereign character and political independence of States, as well as with General Assembly resolution 2625 (XXV) of 1970 and many others that we do not need to point out now.

In that connection, Bolivia wishes to recall that those principles serve as the indispensable conditions for the fulfilment of the purposes and principles of the Charter. In Bolivia's view, legitimate regional and subregional organizations are crucial to the stability and security of the regions. Those organizations become natural mediators for possible conflicts owing to their proximity and familiarity with the surrounding environment, and because they share culture and history and sometimes even the language of the parties. Those characteristics afford them the ability to address conflicts and create conditions conducive to the achievement of lasting solutions to regional problems on the basis of the mutual benefit of States and the principles of international law.

In that regard, we commend the work carried out by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. We believe it to be an inclusive and important platform for building mutual trust in the region and that it is contributing to the exchange of knowledge, offering assistance for the creation of new institutions and acting as an important channel that contributes to resolving security issues in Europe.

Furthermore, we believe that the measures and mechanisms of preventive diplomacy, both of the United Nations and of the regional organizations, must be coordinated and directed towards the early identification of possible crises and the exchange of impartial information without any political agendas or interference from other countries based on geopolitical interests, which must be carried out with the ultimate purpose of protecting, first of all, peace in the regions, looking out for the well-being of future generations and preventing what the Organization was created to address, namely, the scourge of war.

Similarly, we must also discuss the role that has been played by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in generating conflicts in Europe and in the world. That collective military defence alliance, which was originally created in 1949, is today an anachronistic organization that met the needs of other periods and

not the problems of our times. That organization has sought to play a role in safeguarding international peace and security, a role that is not appropriate to it, as it has received no such mandate from the international community and thereby acts to undermine the authority of the Security Council. Finally, it is important to remember that many of the underlying conflicts in Europe have been the result of the continued expansion of NATO, an expansion that endangers regional and global peace.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. António Guterres, the Secretary General of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Mr. Lamberto Zannier, and the Secretary General of the European External Action Service of the European Union, Ms. Helga Schmid, for their briefings.

The Security Council has a very ambitious mission, namely, to evaluate the entirety of the threats to European security and propose solutions thereto. It is a difficult mission, because each situation that we are discussing today has its own particularities, including historical ones. At the same time, there are unifying factors. First and foremost among them would be the failure of efforts to implement plans to create a single Europe. Secondly, in many of those conflicts, there have been clear attempts by the West to intervene from the outside, which has necessarily led to the exacerbation of crises. Thirdly, there is the concept that the solution for conflicts in Europe cannot be military in nature.

At the end of the Cold War, there was a real possibility that the European security space could be unified. I would quote the Charter of Paris for a New Europe, of 1990, which set forth that "relations will be founded on respect and cooperation ... and equal security for all ...". The European representatives in this Chamber have heard many times about the need to ensure indivisible security from Lisbon to Vladivostok, where the security of one State cannot be ensured at the expense of the security of others.

For its part, Russia actively attempted to assist in the implementation of the single Europe concept. We would like to remind the Council of the Russian-German initiative of 2010, which sought to create a European Union-Russia committee on matters of foreign policy and security as a forum for discussing a comprehensive agenda. Unfortunately, the European Union decided not to follow through on that promising idea. We are pretty confident that had that initiative been developed further, many conflicts on the continent could have been avoided, including in Ukraine.

Instead, we are seeing an extension of NATO to the East. Russia continues to oppose such an approach, because NATO expansion creates a superficial feeling of security while leading, instead, to an unprecedented level of tension in Europe in the past 30 years. The intention to create equal security for all was the basis for the Russian proposal for a comprehensive agreement on European security. That proposal was presented during the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly, at which time we also did not get positive reactions from our partners. We are convinced that the reckless refutation of that comprehensive security policy became the root cause for the current situation in which old conflicts have remained frozen and new conflicts have emerged in Europe.

One of the most pressing issues is the situation in Ukraine, which continues to be difficult and unpredictable, as can be seen from the clashes that took place at the end of January and the beginning of February in Avdiivka. At that time, the Council unanimously called upon the sides to restore the ceasefire and to implement the Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements, which continues to be the recognized necessary basis for a peaceful solution. The Agreements must be implemented, as should agreements reached during the talks, including at the level of the Normandy leaders format. Otherwise, the conflict could become frozen.

Unfortunately, our concerns were well founded with respect to the Ukrainian delegation and the use of the Security Council for furthering political propaganda. It is unfortunate that this is happening on the very day of the third anniversary of the signing of an agreement by the former President of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovych, and the opposition. If the implementation of that document had not been rejected the very next day and had it not been condoned by the Governments of Germany, Poland and France, it could have saved the country and its people from upheaval.

Ukraine is in the throes of a far-reaching crisis. Kyiv is unable to resolve the crisis. They are afraid of losing power because there have been attempts to resolve the situation through military misadventures. The goal is to distract people from the pressing social issues and demonstrate the alleged inability of the

Minsk agreements to work. We think that the words of President Poroshenko were particularly cynical. On 16 February, he restated the position that he and his team have long held that we must restore those territories to Ukraine via political and diplomatic means alone. There is no alternative to the Minsk package. Kyiv must begin to implement those agreements, which are required for a political solution. The failure to implement the agreements hinders the settlement process. We were not surprised that the statement of the Ukrainian delegation did not contain even one reference to the Minsk agreements.

With respect to allegations that the Russian decision to recognize certain documents from the Donetsk and Lugansk regions allegedly runs counter to the Minsk agreements, I stress that they do not run counter to any of our country's international obligations. They were adopted in the interest of people to ensure that they enjoy their rights and freedoms, in a context in which it seems that the Government of Ukraine is attempting to achieve the opposite. The recent thematic report of the Special Monitoring Mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) reports conflict-related difficulties encountered by civilians in eastern Ukraine during the period from May to September 2016. First and foremost, the main problems discussed as a result of Kyiv's special regime for the territories not controlled by the Government are linked to the difficult procedures for crossing the contact line, as well as to the use of State services and the suspension of the payment of pensions and benefits.

We note that the United States and France, like other members of the Security Council, allow citizens of Taiwan, who they do not officially recognize, into their countries. A similar situation obtains with regard to the Turkish area of Cyprus. Kosovo highlights another such instance. We continue to be guided by the idea that the only basis for any settlement of this that matter is resolution 1244 (1999). We believe that high-level dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, with European Union mediation, is a mechanism for normalizing relations between the sides. Implementing the agreement is of key importance, first and foremost, for the creation of the Community of Serb-mahority Municipalities in Kosovo. We are against Kosovo becoming a member of international organizations; the right to represent Kosovo in the international arena belongs exclusively to the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

With regard to the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, we underscore the need for full compliance with the Dayton Peace Agreement. We are in favour of internal Bosnian dialogue without outside interference, curtailing the presence of a protectorate, through the apparatus of the High Representative. We believe that it would be destructive to exacerbate the situation with respect to the Republika Srpska in relation to the celebration of Republic Day on 9 January. We think that United States restrictive measures against Bosnian-Serbian leaders are unjustified and baseless. They are unilateral sanctions.

Russia's position on Cyprus has not changed. We would like to see an equitable, comprehensive and viable settlement on the island. In the interests of all of its people, we would support Cypriot-led solutions and the inclusion of Security Council members in the discussion of political solutions on the matter of security guarantees. We think that guarantees from the Security Council would be best, rather than from separate countries.

The situation in Transnistria remains complicated. We welcome the resumption of international talks in the 5+2 format, as well as bilateral contacts at various levels, including the first meeting in eight years between the President of Moldova and the leader of Transnistria. Our approach to Moldova and its borders as they stood on 1 January 1990, with the guaranteed status for Transnistria, has not changed. We stand ready to act as a mediator and to uphold security guarantees.

The conflict in the Caucasus was addressed in August 2008, in particular with respect to the misadventures of Mr. Saakashvili and the emergence of the two independent States of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. What matters now is not the settlement of the conflict but rather a normalization of relations between Georgia and the two young Republics. That issue was also addressed during the Geneva discussions.

The conflict in the Nagorno Karabakh is the most difficult and has the most destructive impact on the Commonwealth of Independent States. The military phase concluded in 1994 with the signing of the ceasefire agreement by the two sides. Since then, to conclude a peace agreement, there have been talks mediated by the OSCE Minsk Group, co-chaired by Russia, the United States and France, drawing upon its relations with Baku and Yerevan to identify agreed approaches. That has to happen on the political and

diplomatic tracks exclusively and through dialogue between the sides on the basis of the standards and principles of international law.

Once again, we call on our colleagues to set aside confrontational approaches to ensuring their own security by undermining that of others. Instead, we should seek mutually acceptable solutions to the crises in Europe. Russian policy is based on establishing a shared security and stability space, the basis of our relations with Europe, our good neighbourliness and reciprocal benefits. We are part of a unified continent. We have written history together and achieve success when we work together for the prosperity of our peoples.

The President: I believe that the analogy given by Russia with regard to occupied Donbas or Northern Cyprus and Taiwan is very telling but we will respond to that a bit later.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China commends Ukraine for taking the initiative to convene today's ministerial-level open debate on resolving conflicts in Europe. We also welcome Foreign Minister Klimkin, who is presiding over today's meeting. I would like to thank Secretary-General Guterres for his briefing.

China listened attentively to the statements made by Mr. Zannier, Secretary General of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and Ms. Schmid, Secretary General of the European External Action Service. In recent years, the situation in Europe has generally been calm and positive progress has been made on hotspot issues. However, complex and uncertain factors remain pronounced, as manifested by terrorist attacks in some countries, the ongoing refugee crisis and the rise in traditional and non-traditional security challenges. Therefore, the concerted efforts of all countries are required to respond to such challenges. I would like to emphasize the following points.

First, we must foster the concept of community with a shared destiny. After the people of Europe suffered the devastation of the two world wars, cherishing peace is the common aspiration of all countries. European integration is a regional cooperation process that was the first of its kind to be launched, the fastest to develop and the most remarkable in progress after the Second World War. As most European countries have national interests that are deeply intertwined and have close relations with countries outside of the region, they can better the importance of building a community with a shared destiny. We hope the countries of Europe will discard the zero-sum-game notion; build a new kind of international relations characterized by win-win cooperation at its core; nurture a common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable paradigm of security; actively bring into play their strengths in economic development and interconnectivity; constantly create new growth drivers based on converging interests; enhance cooperation with other regions of the world; and make unremitting efforts towards achieving lasting peace and common development.

Secondly, all countries should adhere to resolving disputes peacefully. They should continue to observe the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and stay committed to settling their differences through dialogue and consultation. Parties to volatile issues in Europe should display good will; respect each other; enhance mutual trust; build up consensus; and endeavour to find comprehensive, just and lasting solutions to the issues. The international community and regional countries should play an active role in facilitating peace talks and encouraging the parties concerned to scale up their dialogue, meet each other halfway and seize positive momentum, with a view to enhancing mediation efforts and contributing positively to peaceful settlement.

Thirdly, diversity in civilizations should be respected. The diversity of and differences among the nations, religions and cultures in European countries represent an important source for progress in the region. All countries should continue to engage in all-embracing and harmonious exchanges among civilizations, while acknowledging the differences; advocate ethnic integration; promote dialogue among religions; defuse and reconcile differences through mutual learning and complementarity; foster a stable and harmonious social environment; and create an enabling climate for properly handling regional conflicts, terrorism and refugee issues.

Fourthly, cooperation between the Security Council and regional organizations in Europe, such as the European Union (EU) and the OSCE should be strengthened. The Security Council is the core mechanism responsible for maintaining international peace and security, while the EU and the OSCE have accumulated rich experience in conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. They should make full use of their respective strengths and form synergies

to resolve conflicts in Europe and safeguard peace and stability in the region. Relevant efforts should be guided by the principles of objectivity, impartiality and respect for the sovereignty of the countries concerned. Furthermore, efforts should be made to heed the views of the parties concerned, while refraining from double standards and the imposition of one's will upon others.

China has always attached great importance to the strategic position and role of Europe, and Sino-European relations have consistently been a priority in Chinese diplomacy. We welcome a united, stable and prosperous Europe. China stands ready, through the One Belt, One Road initiative and other platforms — including the Sino-European Cooperation Mechanism — to deepen the comprehensive Sino-European strategic partnership, which is based on mutual benefits and win-win cooperation. We also stand ready to work with the EU to achieve fresh progress in four partnership areas through the promotion of peace, growth, reform and civilization, and to make a greater contribution to achieving lasting peace in Europe and common prosperity.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): We thank the Ukrainian presidency for its wisdom in organizing this debate. We should also like to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres, the Secretary General of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the observer of the European Union for their briefings.

Although the Security Council has been seized with a number of European issues under this agenda item, this is perhaps the first time that the Council is broadly discussing conflicts in Europe as threats to international peace and security. That we are now living in a turbulent world has become very clear. One gets the sense that we are undergoing a transition at the global level. But it is impossible to say where we are heading, because it is difficult to talk even about the general contours of what we are transitioning into. One can understand, therefore, why Secretary-General Guterres has defined the current global situation as chaotic. At no time has multilateral diplomacy been as vitally needed as it is now. It is also for that reason that the Ukrainian presidency should be commended for organizing this debate.

Europe is not merely vital for the success of multilateral diplomacy — it is indispensable. A peaceful and harmonious Europe can serve as an important pillar for global peace at a time when, at the global level, there is more confusion than clarity. That is making the global situation potentially more dangerous than perhaps at any time since the advent of the post-Cold-War period. Some might go so far as to say since the end of the Second World War.

When experts begin to draw parallels between the current period and the times prior to the First World War, people with common sense should put their ears to the ground. As far as we are concerned, we do not claim to be experts on European issues, but we do recognize from history that the peace and security of Europe has always had a major impact on the peace and security of our world. Conflicts in Europe have, in the past, resulted in two devastating world wars and, during the post-Second World War period, in an international order that has ensured durable peace and unprecedented prosperity on the continent. Europe also means a lot to us in Africa for our development and for our peace and security. Europe is perhaps one of the most generous and effective partners of the African Union (AU), and the AU is critical for the future of Africa. It is against that backdrop that we look with a great deal of concern at some of the unresolved conflicts in Europe that are still on the agenda of the Council, as well as those that have emerged recently. Dialogue and negotiation remain the only way to find a durable political and diplomatic solution to some of the difficult and extremely delicate issues of peace and security in Europe.

In that regard, as is true with all other conflict situations, the political will and commitment of the parties to the protracted and new conflicts in Europe is crucial, not only in order to reach a peaceful settlement but also to ensure that agreements are fully respected and implemented. No doubt, building the necessary trust and confidence between and among parties is the key to making progress. The United Nations should continue to work closely with the European Union and the OSCE in the pursuit of those objectives.

We realize that Europe is indeed passing through a very difficult period. Like the rest of the world, it is confronting serious challenges involving an economic slowdown; the migration and refugee crisis; heightened threats of terrorism; and the resurgence of populist tendencies, all of which threaten to undermine its stability and prosperity, as well as the refined cultural values that have made Europe an example to the rest of the world. We understand there are no quick fixes to some of those challenges and, in a much more

interconnected and interdependent world, Europe cannot alone find a solution to the difficult and complex challenge it is facing.

There is no substitute in this regard in Europe or elsewhere for ensuring peace, security and stability through scrupulous observance of principles of international law governing inter-State relations. That is why reaffirming the multilateral approach and investing in a stronger United Nations and enhancing cooperation and partnership with other regional organizations, such as the African Union, is a sensible and logical thing to do, as the European Union High Representative Federica Mogherini stated during the just concluded Munich Security Conference.

Let us not forget that we have a Secretary-General who takes himself as a bridge-builder seriously. He needs to be empowered. This is a time when we need a moral arbiter, but one who is not too ostentatious about his or her role.

For us in Africa, let me reiterate that Europe is not only a neighbouring continent, but also an important partner in addressing the many peace and security, as well as development, challenges we face. Therefore, we hope Europe will remain true to the spirit of the strategic partnership that has been forged with Africa in tackling issues of mutual concern, as well as in ensuring collective peace, security and prosperity.

Mr. Cardi (Italy): I would like to thank the Ukrainian presidency for convening such an important debate. Faced with multiple challenges and new threats, today more than ever we are called upon to find collective and peaceful solutions, including in Europe.

Exactly 60 years ago, Europe's founding fathers signed the Treaty of Rome, the first crucial step towards the establishment of the European Union. Re-emerging from the horrific ashes of the Second World War, against all odds they initiated an era of unprecedented and unsurpassed peace and prosperity. Most importantly, they proved that the people's innate longing for solidarity and peaceful coexistence can, if given a chance, prevail over the sterile push towards ultranationalism, isolation and exclusion.

Having experienced the self-destructive repercussions of such impulses, my country was proud to host the dawning of Europe, which is and remains a model of peaceful coexistence, common values, democracy, solidarity and openness. It is an approach that, we believe, will best serve the future of our own children. On 25 March, in cooperation with the Maltese presidency of the Council of the European Union, we will host in Rome a summit of the Heads of State and Government of the European Union members. It is a way to honour a symbolic moment, but also an important occasion to reinvigorate the spirit of the European project and to underscore the European Union's potential as a force of peace and for peace.

In the current situation where instability and isolationism are reawakening in Europe and beyond, it is imperative in our view to foster a multilateral approach vis-à-vis protracted crises on our continent, to leverage all the tools at our disposal to prevent conflicts, and to respond to whomever threatens to violate the principles embodied in the Charter of the United Nations, the international legal order and the equal rights to existence of any country or people. In that regard, I would like to reaffirm Italy's commitment to ensuring that any international dispute in Europe is resolved through legal and peaceful means, while upholding the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, the inviolability of frontiers and the principles embodied in the Helsinki Final Act.

Italy views with great concern the tensions on the eastern flank of the continent, starting with Ukraine, in the Caucasus and in the Balkans. We believe that the only acceptable and possible outcome of the crisis in Ukraine lies in a lasting political solution preserving Ukraine's territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty. That can be attained only through a constructive dialogue involving all concerned parties and actors. Italy firmly supports the pivotal role of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the reconciliation efforts of the Normandy group, which convened in Munich on Saturday to facilitate progress towards the swift and full implementation of the Minsk agreements, which incorporate not only security aspects, but also political clauses, as well as the necessary economy-boosting measures, and are the only platform for a lasting compromise.

We also support the efforts of the OSCE for a peaceful and comprehensive resolution of the Transnistrian conflict, based on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Moldova, with a special status for Transnistria. In this framework, we welcome the resumption of talks in the 5+2 format last June.

Looking at the long-running tensions in the Caucasus, I reaffirm in the same spirit my country's commitment to Georgia's territorial integrity and call for an intensification of the dialogue with the breakaway regions to relaunch the Geneva talks. I also would like to reassert Italy's support to a peaceful solution of the situation in Nagorno Karabakh and welcome the efforts of the three co-Chairs of the Minsk Group for a compromise grounded on the Helsinki Final Act and the 1997 Madrid Principles.

The persisting difficult political situation in the Western Balkans is a dire warning of the risk of relapse into conflict in a region, which is at the very heart of Europe and essential to its security. We call on all local leaders to tone down their rhetoric and to genuinely embrace the European Union's steadfast support to dialogue and peace in the region. Only by following the path of mutual collaboration and regional cooperation, countries of the Western Balkans will be able to ensure a better future for their own people. We continue to work in this direction also as Chair in 2017 of the Berlin Process, in view of the summit on the Western Balkans, which we will host in July in Trieste.

Today, an agreed settlement for a reunited Cyprus is closer than ever. We strongly support the continuation of the talks, the two communities' ownership of the negotiations and the mediation role played by the United Nations and the European Union. No prosperity or achievement is borne out of division, and the people of Cyprus deserve a workable agreement and to prosper in a common endeavour.

Europe turned last century's scars into a formidable set of tools to prevent and resolve further conflicts. Italy welcomes the renewed dedication of Secretary-General António Guterres to political solutions to crises and will work with all the members of the United Nations and of the Security Council to sustain peace in Europe and beyond. By leveraging Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, we entrust regional organizations, such as the OSCE and the European Union, with the responsibility to promote conflict resolution across the continent, reaping substantial results, such as the progress achieved in the Ukrainian crisis.

Finally, the European Union, thanks to ambitious and effective stances, such as its enlargement and neighbourhood policies, is the strongest driver for peace and resilience in Europe and, through its vast and substantial external action, an irresistible stabilizing force for the whole world and for our collective security.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Since the 1990s, the world has witnessed many geostrategic transformations that have fuelled conflicts throughout Europe. Despite the enormous efforts undertaken, the desired progress has not been achieved in reaching lasting solutions to the conflicts with regard to Nagorno Karabakh, Azkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria, as well as to the situations in Ukraine, the Balkans and Cyprus.

It is important to note that the current situation and the relative calm engulfing several of those conflicts do not indicate in any way that the regional parties concerned have reached sustainable solutions, given the continued polarization and failure to address the root causes of tension between the warring parties. That could lead to further fuelling of the situation in the future. In that vein, we commend the efforts by the OSCE and other existing mechanisms to bring stability to a number of hotspots in Europe through preventive diplomacy, mediation, good offices and peacebuilding measures.

Egypt calls for the redoubling of efforts and urges all parties to shoulder their responsibilities and demonstrate the necessary political will to settle those conflicts peacefully. We also see the need for full complementarity between the roles of the OSCE and the United Nations. We appreciate the contributions of the Organization in consolidating international efforts to reach a political solution in Ukraine in accordance with the Minsk agreements, which are seen as the ideal framework to achieve a durable and sustainable settlement of the ongoing conflict. We call for the full implementation of resolution 2202 (2015), which calls upon all parties to fully implement the Minsk agreements, in particular the commitment to the ceasefire and the withdrawal of heavy weapons, as well as undertaking the necessary constitutional reforms and organizing local elections the Donbas region. The agreements also call for addressing the humanitarian repercussions of the conflict in coordination with all parties concerned, without exception.

In the same vein, we call for the implementation of the arrangements of the Minsk Group to settle the Nagorno Karabakh conflict — for its peaceful settlement, dialogue and avoiding the interference in the internal affairs of the country. Such solutions

should be based on the norms of international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

With regard to the issue of Cyprus, we call for a durable solution to that situation in line with the United Nations Charter and the relevant Security Council resolutions. It is vital that we move beyond the current security arrangements, which are obsolete and fail to reflect the current political reality.

In conclusion, I would like to note that Egypt nutures friendly and cooperative relations with all European States. Given those friendly relations that tie the Egyptian people to the peoples of the region, we reaffirm the need to develop the approach adopted to address conflicts in Europe to move from their mere management and satisfaction with the avoidance of an all-out, violent conflict to achieving sustainable and durable peace. Egypt therefore calls for more concerted regional and international efforts. We are confident that the broad spectrum of cooperation and complementarity among the European countries will enable them to overcome those conflicts through reliance on logic and a sense of urgency.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I thank our three Secretaries-General for their briefings today. The three organizations — the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Union (EU) — are all playing a crucial role to preserve peace and security in Europe, and we are grateful for all of the work that they do.

Everything that we do in the Security Council has come about as a direct result of conflicts in Europe. More than seven decades since the Second World War, we should be proud that Europeans now enjoy a level of stability and prosperity that would have been unthinkable to our grandparents' generation.

As we heard so clearly in the meeting on Ukraine earlier this month (see S/PV.7876), instability and insecurity persist in Europe. The borders of Europe are threatened today in a way not seen since the Cold War. The territorial integrity of your country, Mr. President, has been flagrantly violated, leaving up to 10,000 dead and millions displaced. At the heart of that disregard for sovereignty lies the Russia Federation and its world view that thinks Moscow's interest can and should prevail over the sovereign and democratic choices of independent countries. It is a world view illustrated by Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and continued support for separatists in eastern Ukraine.

Only a few days ago, Russia recognized passports from the so-called People's Republics in Donbas under the guise of humanitarian assistance for a conflict that Russia itself instigated. A more appropriate response would be for Russia to honour its commitments under the Minsk agreements, including by withdrawing its troops and equipment from Ukraine and using its influence over the separatists to implement the ceasefire and heavy-weapons withdrawal agreement. Until all such commitments are met in full, Russia will remain under sanctions from the European Union and Group of Seven States.

Put simply, we cannot stand idly by in the face of such aggression. The Council has a responsibility to sustain the peace won in Europe seven decades ago, to ensure that the rules-based international order — most notably the Charter of the United Nations — is respected and upheld by all countries. We have a responsibility to ensure that wars waged across battlefields are ended through dialogue pursued across tables.

The three organizations from which we have heard today are playing a vital role in those efforts. In the face of great odds and escalating violence, the OSCE is bravely monitoring the line of contact in Ukraine; the United Nations is bringing vital aid and much-needed relief to those suffering; and, through sanctions; and the EU is bringing pressure to bear on Russia to meet its commitments under the Minsk agreements. But those organizations cannot do it alone. All sides must step up and make a ceasefire a reality, implementing the Minsk agreements in full.

Sadly, the need for a peaceful political settlement extends far beyond the borders of Ukraine. In the interest of time, I will not mention every single conflict in Europe. The flashing light, after all, is meant to be a sign to stop and not one of encouragement to keep going. I should therefore like to just mention a few of the other conflicts.

In Georgia, the conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia remain unresolved, with Russian pressure showing no signs of dissipating. In Moldova, it is long past time for a comprehensive peaceful settlement of the Transnistrian conflict, one based on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Moldova with a special status for the Transnistrian region. In Nagorno Karabakh, a peaceful settlement also remains elusive, owing to a high level of mistrust and lack of any political will to

compromise. We support the efforts of the co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group.

Across the continent, the United Kingdom will continue to be a force for peace in Europe through our membership in NATO, the OSCE and, of course, this Council. Our own security has long depended on the strong partnerships of the Euro-Atlantic area, and we are therefore committed to strengthening those partnerships further, including by maintaining the NATO target of spending 2 per cent of our economy on defence. I strongly encourage all NATO allies to meet that target. NATO has responded in a coherent, comprehensive and measured fashion to Russia's destabilization and provocation. It has modernized its deterrence and defence posture as a balanced response to the instability and insecurity that Russia has attempted to sow, while also being open to dialogue with Russia.

Three years since the Maidan protests, we speak clearly in this Chamber today to reaffirm our total support for principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty as outlined in the United Nations Charter and the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, known as the Helsinki Final Act. We speak clearly to say that we do and will not recognize the illegal annexation of Crimea. I am proud to do so again today on behalf of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Bessho (Japan): After the bitter experience of two world wars, Europe embarked on an ambitious effort to promote a rules-based international order, fully rejecting coercion. It has upheld principles that prohibit the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State and oblige the peaceful resolution of international disputes.

With 57 member States today, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has become the world's largest regional security institution and has long contributed to conflict prevention and sustaining peace through confidence-building measures.

For over 70 years, Japan has joined its European and American partners in upholding the fundamental values of freedom, democracy, the rule of law, a market economy and human rights. It has strongly supported the United Nations system that embodies those values. In sharing the same liberal values and proactively contributing to peace, NATO has similarly been a trusted and natural partner for Japan.

Notwithstanding this progress, Japan is concerned by the continuation of hot and frozen conflicts in Europe. While the majority of those conflicts originated in long-standing ethnic tensions, many have been prolonged and exacerbated by flagrant acts that contravene the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the Helsinki Accords.

Japan is deeply concerned at the recent deterioration of the situation in eastern Ukraine. The ongoing conflict in Ukraine, in which almost 10,000 people are estimated to have been killed, is a significant threat to the peace and security of Europe. The full implementation of the Minsk agreements — which the Council endorsed in resolution 2202 (2015) — by all the parties concerned is essential. We commend efforts by the OSCE, as well as those by France and Germany under the Normandy format, including the convening of last week's Foreign Ministers meeting.

On Crimea, we are opposed to any attempt to modify Ukraine's borders through the threat or use of force or other unlawful means. The so-called referendum held in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol in March 2014 does not constitute the basis for any alteration of the status of Crimea. We call upon all States to fully respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

The situation in Europe affects the entire international community. Threats to the territorial integrity of one country cannot be ignored, because they would undermine the fundamental principles upon which the entire international legal order is based.

In order to resolve Europe's conflicts, major countries of the region need to step up their efforts. Regional and subregional organizations, such as the OSCE and the European Union, play a significant role in conflict resolution, and the cooperation between the United Nations and those organizations is becoming increasingly important. The Council should pay closer attention to protracted conflicts in Europe so that they do not turn into serious threats to the peace and security of the region.

Today, Europe faces emerging issues, such as violent extremism and humanitarian crises involving refugees and immigrants. The international community must strengthen its response to those crises. United Nations-wide efforts are essential to address root causes such as poverty and social injustice, and we fully support the ongoing reform efforts by Secretary-

General Guterres. The Japanese Government has decided to provide an additional $750 million in assistance to address humanitarian and refugee issues, as well as terrorism, through the United Nations and other international organizations.

Europe must play a crucial role in upholding the international order based on the rule of law. It is well positioned to do so, as the host to the major international courts and tribunals such as the International Court of Justice, the International Criminal Court, the Permanent Court of Arbitration and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea.

Japan's faith in the ideal of regional integration in Europe, which has contributed and will hopefully continue to contribute to an improved quality of life, vanishing borders and the resolution of ethnic tensions, remains unchanged. We stand shoulder to shoulder with Europe in supporting ethnic and religious tolerance and in upholding the values of freedom, democracy and the rule of law.

The President: I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements, if possible, to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously and effectively. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the text in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber. I also wish to inform the Council that we will carry on this open debate right through the lunch hour, as we have a large number of speakers on the list.

I now give the floor to Mr. Péter Szijjártó, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary.

Mr. Szijjártó (Hungary) (*spoke in Russian*): Allow me to express my sincere condolences on the death of the Permanent Representative of Russia to the United Nations. Ambassador Churkin was an outstanding diplomat who gained great respect through his work both here in New York and throughout the world.

(*spoke in English*)

I thank you very much, Mr. President, for convening this meeting and organizing this open debate. It is very timely, since currently Europe is experiencing a period when we are facing the most numerous simultaneous and serious security challenges and armed conflicts since the conclusion of the Cold War. The European Union, which once was the most successful political and economic integration in the world, has never had to face so many challenges and threats.

But the conflicts and the challenges are not only European ones. All of the conflicts we have been experiencing in Europe have global components, global factors, sometimes global reasons, and all are part of global political developments. We Europeans speak a lot about these conflicts. We are looking for solutions, but we have to admit that it is not really only us Europeans who can resolve them. Whether these conflicts will be resolved or not is not only up to us Europeans. In our understanding, these conflicts will have a realistic chance to be overcome and resolved if in the future there is a change in the United States-Russia relationship toward pragmatism and improvement.

We have a very simple historical experience in Central Europe: whenever there is a conflict between East and West, Central Europe usually loses. And whenever we lose, we usually lose big-time. That is why we are crossing our fingers that the new American Administration and the Administration of Russia will be able to build a better relationship, to get along with each other better, or — in the words of the new President of the United States — to make a deal. Without closer cooperation between the United States and Russia, we see no realistic hope for sustainable solutions to our threats and challenges. There are some clear truths in recent history. I am fairly certain that no one doubts that there would be no nuclear deal with Iran if Russia and the United States had not sat on the same side of the negotiating table.

That is why we are very happy with all initiatives that bring us closer to a better United States-Russia relationship. We consider absolutely harmful all initiatives and decisions that bring us farther from better cooperation. We usually hear, in various formats, two expressions: "dialogue" and "deterrence". We Hungarians, we Central Europeans, do hope that the United States and Russia will put a lot of emphasis on engaging in dialogue based on mutual trust and respect for international law.

That enhanced cooperation will offer a better chance to destroy the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham and to finally vanquish terror. Without that, tackling the root causes of the mass illegal migratory flows, which have very seriously impacted the European Union in the past, will be impossible. Some bad international political decisions and mismanaged crises

have seen systems destabilized, economies ruined and dictatorships emerging among Europe's neighbours, forcing people to flee their homes in massive numbers. Resolving those problems and thereby creating peace and stability in Europe's neighbourhood, which will have a direct impact on Europe's own security, is such a major task that it is simply impossible to accomplish it without active cooperation between the United States and Russia.

Since I come from Hungary, where we have some major disturbances and tensions arising from time to time around us, I would very briefly like to emphasize two issues. The first is that we see full implementation of the Minsk agreement as the only way to end the conflict in Ukraine. We therefore hope to see it implemented faster and in full, just as we hope for long-lasting stability and predictability in the western Balkans, to which end we support the path of European integration for that historic region and hope that will also be realized as soon as possible.

I would like to say that it is an honour to be addressing the Security Council, and we hope that in future the Council will continue to be a forum for dialogue that can help overcome the enormous challenges that Europe and the European Union have been facing recently.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Lithuania.

Mr. Linkevičius (Lithuania): I would first like to convey my condolences to the family of Mr. Vitaly Churkin, whom I knew personally for many years. I would also like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your country's successful presidency of the Security Council for the month of February, and on your organization of today's important debate. The theme for today's discussion will enable us to evaluate the current threats posed to international peace and security by the conflicts in Europe and to discuss the best ways to tackle them.

The end of the Cold War, the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the termination of the ideological stand-off that divided Europe for almost five decades created expectations for a new era in European security. However, today's Europe is neither free from confrontation nor at peace. The frozen conflicts in Moldova's Transnistria and in the Nagorno Karabakh region, a military intervention in Georgia, increasing influence in the Western Balkans and an aggression against Ukraine, along with the illegal annexation of Crimea — those are not isolated cases but rather a broader pattern of behaviour over the years that one of the founding members of the United Nations has been pursuing in its neighbourhood, with the aim of redrawing European borders.

With its well-established, large-scale, soft-power system, using energy, economic and military levers, Russia continues to hamper the integration of the countries of the Western Balkans into Euro-Atlantic structures, attempting to preserve the status quo through the distrust and animosity that still continues between those nations. In Transnistria, Russia defends and sometimes defines the aspirations of the separatist regime and threatens neighbouring countries through the presence of its own troops. Russia is also fuelling an arms race between Azerbaijan and Armenia that could once again lead to their considering military options. With its ongoing creeping annexation of Georgian Abkhazia and South Ossetia and through its so-called referendums, elections and even name changes of those occupied regions, Russia is once again violating the bedrock principles of the international order.

It is clear that we should use all the available tools and mechanisms to revive negotiation processes that have been seriously stalled and unite our efforts in order to avoid new protracted conflicts, particularly in Ukraine, where Russia's unprovoked Russian aggression, sheltering behind the rebels it supports, will soon enter its fourth year, with almost 10,000 people killed and more than 23,000 injured. The recent indiscriminate shelling of Avdiivka showed that the military confrontation is spreading, endangering many thousands more. I visited Avdiivka recently myself, met with people who live in houses that have been destroyed and witnessed clear violations of the Minsk agreements in person. Once again, we need to give serious impetus to the stalled implementation of the agreements, which can be achieved only when Russia withdraws its troops from Ukrainian territory and Ukraine re-establishes full control over its State border.

In order to make progress in dealing with the enormous challenges in Europe, we need collective action at various levels. First, we see the United Nations as a key actor in effective multilateralism and a basis for our international system. We need a robust United Nations, capable of addressing complex global challenges. A close and proactive working relationship between the Secretary-General and the Security

Council would contribute to that. Regardless of the Council's frequent inaction, owing to the practice of the veto, it should pay closer attention to the protracted conflicts in Europe, because they are liable to escalate and therefore threaten the region's overall stability and security.

Secondly, regional and subregional organizations such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Union (EU) are playing a leading role in the conflict and post-conflict environments in Europe. We greatly value the OSCE's engagement in frozen conflicts, from Transnistria to the Caucasus, and in the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, particularly through its Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine. We call for unrestricted access for the Special Monitoring Mission throughout the territory of Ukraine. We must rethink the role and engagement of the OSCE in Ukraine, including through the possible creation of an OSCE security mission for the local elections.

Thirdly, through its enlargement policy, the EU is playing a significant role in promoting normalized relations between Serbia and Kosovo and the reconciliation process in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as among individual countries in the Western Balkans. The EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia has ensured a long-term international monitoring presence in the country and is a key factor for its stability. The EU Advisory Mission Ukraine, which deals with civilian security-sector reform and has a regional presence in Lviv and Kharkiv, is an important tool that should be further strengthened and expanded. Lastly, the EU has progressively imposed restrictive measures on Russia, including a sanctions regime, that will be in place as long as the Minsk agreements are not fully implemented. We therefore strongly advocate for a comprehensive partnership between the European Union and the United Nations that would increase their ability to act and deliver.

In conclusion, two years ago, in this Chamber, we commemorated the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations, reflecting on its history and reaffirming our strong commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Today, a Europe whole, free and at peace is not yet a reality. But it remains our lodestar. If we are to succeed, we must share those same aspirations and recommit to the principles on which European security is built.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Georgia.

Mr. Janelidze (Georgia): At the outset, I would like to thank the Ukrainian presidency for convening today's important and timely debate, giving us an opportunity to focus on our region and reflect on ways of responding to the security challenges and continuing instability on the continent. I would like to thank Secretary-General António Guterres; Mr. Lamberto Zannier, Secretary General of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE); Ms. Helga Schmid, Secretary General of the European External Action Service of the European Union (EU); and those Ministers who have participated in and contributed to the debate.

The United Nations was created to put an end to war and serve as an international instrument for preventing conflicts and maintaining peace and security. Today, however, one can hardly point to any region that is free from security threats and confrontations. The multiple conflicts in Europe share similarities and common patterns, including the infringement of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of neighbouring States. We have all seen aggression, first in Georgia and then in Ukraine, and it may happen elsewhere if no action is taken today. In Europe, we have all witnessed the reversal of the political culture of cooperation that is enshrined in the landmark documents of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe and the OSCE. We have gone back to the politics of threats and the use of force.

It is particularly alarming when the security architecture is deliberately undermined by a permanent member of the Security Council whose precise duty it is to stand guard over international principles. Over the past decade, an inability to solve protracted conflicts and prevent the emergence of new ones has revealed the fundamental deficiencies of the current international security architecture. I should recall here that for 16 years, starting in the early 1990s, in this very Chamber the Council adopted 39 resolutions on the conflict on Georgia, reaffirming my country's territorial integrity and sovereignty within its internationally recognized borders, denouncing ethnic cleansing and stressing the necessity

> "to address seriously the need for a dignified return of IDPs [internally displaced persons] and refugees, including their security and human rights concerns" (*resolution 1666 (2006), para. 7*).

In Georgia's experience, a conflict that started in the early 1990s reached its culmination in 2008 with Russia's military intervention in Georgia and the occupation of our territories as the international community failed to effectively respond to the early warning signs. Moreover, following the August war, we even lost the minimal existing safeguards, as in 2009 both the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia and the OSCE mission to Georgia were unilaterally blocked by Russia, despite the increased need for their presence to monitor their situation on the ground.

It is a vivid example that all protracted or dormant conflicts contain a threat of escalation at any time and require regular monitoring by the Security Council, instead of its only reacting to the crises on an ad hoc basis. Therefore, it would be important to launch periodic reporting by the Secretary-General to the Security Council on protracted conflicts.

While the United Nations, the OSCE and the EU have been engaged in international talks between Georgia and Russia as the co-moderators of the Geneva International Discussions for eight years now, more needs to be done to deliver tangible results. That requires, first and foremost, political will and commitment from all. It requires more stewardship on behalf of the co-chairs and the Secretary-General in guiding and assessing the process, based on the principles and norms of international law. We should all support the Secretary-General in assuming a stronger leadership role.

My country has long been committed to the constructive and peaceful policy of reconciliation and confidence-building. Let me stress that Georgia is committed to strive for peace in the region. It was in that spirit that Georgia undertook the unilateral non-use of force commitment, which was never reciprocated. Since 2012, the Government of Georgia has sought the de-escalation of relations with the Russian Federation by taking constructive and practical steps. For that purpose we have established dialogue on issues related to trade, transport and people-to-people relations, which has provided some positive outcomes. We worked constructively in the format of the Geneva International Discussions, open to constructive negotiations.

Last year was marked by the restoration of the Gali Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism. As concerns the relations with our compatriots living in the occupied territories, the ethnic Abkhaz and Ossetians are an integral part of our common history and future, despite the current artificial barriers, and there is no alternative to the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees to their homes and to the full reintegration of all ethnicities into a vibrant society where human rights and individual freedoms, as well as cultural and linguistic diversity of different communities, are top priorities We firmly pursue the engagement, confidence-building and reconciliation process with the people living in the occupied territories. We are offering all benefits, which are open to Georgian citizens. We stand ready to offer all the progress we will achieve along our development path.

Despite all of that, the Russian Federation continues policies aimed at the so-called factual annexation of the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, through illegal agreements on integration signed with de facto authorities on the regions. The decision by the occupation regime to conduct the so-called referendum in the Tskhinvali region to rename it "Republic of South Ossetia-the State of Alania", similar to one of the federal subjects of the Russian Federation, is another attestation of that policy. In parallel, the occupation regime in Abkhazia region took the decision to close the so-called checkpoints on the occupation line, further impairing the free movement of the local population.

We call on the international community to condemn and counter those acts. We thus call upon the Russian Federation to reverse its illegal policy, comply with international obligations, including the 12 August 2008 ceasefire agreement, and grant access to international monitoring mechanisms, first and foremost the European Union Monitoring Mechanism, as provided by its mandate, facilitate the creation of international security arrangements and allow the return of hundreds of thousands of IDPs and refugees who have been forcefully evicted from their homes.

Georgia stands ready to settle the conflict with the Russian Federation by exclusively peaceful means, in accordance with relevant international agreements and with full respect for the fundamental principles of international law. The withdrawal of Russia's occupation forces from Georgia would be the most important stage towards a comprehensive settlement of the Russia-Georgia conflict.

Finally, let me reiterate how important it is that the international community unanimously reaffirm their

adherence to the Charter of the United Nations and the fundamental principles and norms of international law. In that context, I reaffirm Georgia's strong support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of your country, Mr. President, and that of other European States. It is vital that we all spare no efforts in finding effective solutions to conflicts that impact the lives of millions of people.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Croatia.

Mrs. Bušić (Croatia): At the outset, I would like to express the deepest condolences of the Government of Croatia to the Russian Federation for the passing of His Excellency Vitaly Churkin, the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations.

I thank Ukraine for initiating this important and well-timed debate.

Croatia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the European Union. I shall give additional remarks in my national capacity.

Europe came a long way in overcoming the horrible legacy of two world wars that originated on European soil. Today, former battlefields have been turned into areas of close cooperation, peace and prosperity. Nevertheless, some parts of the European continent are still not immune to conflict and strife, and that leads to human suffering and instability. While we are facing new challenges such as mass migration and climate change, existing disputes and unresolved or protracted conflicts are hindering Europe's development and endangering its stability.

The obvious and many-times-uttered question arises here too: what can we, as States and the international community assembled in this Organization, undertake to prevent, mitigate and resolve such occurrences and situations, building upon past practices and implementing lessons learned? Answers may be many, but allow me to share with the Council Croatia's views and experience in that regard.

During the 1990s, Southeast Europe was the unfortunate stage of armed conflicts not seen on the continent since the end of the Second World War. At the same time, that part of Europe was also the place of the largest peacekeeping operations in the history of the United Nations. Several key lessons learned from that period can be summarized as follows. First, a clear and precise mandate is the prerequisite for the success of any operation. Second, the strict observation of international law is crucial, in particular with regard to the inviolability of internationally recognized borders. Third, an engaged preventive diplomacy and a timely response to early warnings — which in the case of the former Yugoslavia utterly failed — are pivotal. Fourth and finally, a tailor-made approach to complex sanctions regimes and their principled implementation can go hand in hand with the above-mentioned elements of the equation.

The United Nations has been haunted by its failures in Rwanda, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, when its peacekeeping forces failed to prevent atrocities and the genocide of civilian populations they purported to protect. It became clear that the United Nations could no longer follow the traditional concept of protection and that the United Nations troops needed to actively defend civilians from armed attacks when necessary.

However, a good example of creative diplomacy and a well-designed peacekeeping mandate can be seen in the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium mission in Croatia, which led to the peaceful reintegration of the occupied Croatian region of Eastern Slavonia into Croatia. To this day, it remains one of the most successful operations in the history of the United Nations. Croatia stands ready to share its experiences concerning all aspects of that fruitful endeavour, together with its know-how in confidence-building, post-conflict stabilization, reconstruction and reconciliation.

European post-conflict experiences demonstrate the importance of institution-building and the strengthening of the rule of law and the administrative framework of the State. This is essential for fostering peace and creating conditions for economic prosperity and job creation. Only then can old animosities be fully replaced with cross-border cooperation and true reconciliation. The history of the European Union, a member State of which Croatia became in 2013, serves as a shining example in this regard.

While the experience of South-East Europe clearly demonstrates how costly the failure not to act on time and in a decisive manner can be, at the same time it also shows that in post-conflict peacebuilding, regional organizations can play an important stabilizing role. Such is, for instance, the engagement of the European Union and its cooperation with the United Nations in

an effective and calibrated burden-sharing in Bosnia-Herzegovina through Operation Althea of the European Union-led peacekeeping force.

As a signatory to the Dayton Peace Agreement, Croatia bears a special responsibility for stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The genuine institutional equality of all three constituent peoples and all citizens is crucial to the long-term stability of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which will contributie to the security of South-East Europe. In this regard, Croatia will also continue to strongly support the European and Euro-Atlantic perspective of Bosnia and Herzegovina and South-East Europe in general as the best impetus for safeguarding sustainable peace, development and the strengthening of institutions.

The Security Council and the international community as a whole should spare no effort to bring an end to current active conflicts in Europe, in particular with a view to mitigating the grave situation in Ukraine. Simultaneously, we ought to push for the resolution of all other existing or protracted conflicts in Europe that continue to endanger international peace and security in the foreseeable future. The tools for this are available and known and the expertise is vast, so we must not allow history to repeat itself because, purportedly, no one was listening the first time around.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Moldova.

Mr. Darii (Moldova): From the very outset, I wish to join previous delegations in expressing our condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of Ambassador Churkin, who passed away suddenly yesterday.

As for the thematic debate today, I would like to thank the Ukrainian presidency for its initiative to convene this ministerial open debate dedicated to conflicts in Europe. This initiative is not only timely but highly necessary, given the fragility of the overall security situation in our region.

We fully share your assessment, Mr. President, that the unresolved conflicts that erupted at the end of the twentieth century and the conflicts that emerged in Europe in the twenty-first have reached a tipping point and constitute a serious challenge to European security and a threat to international peace. These conflicts, some of them unresolved for more than 25 years — such as that in my country — continue to impact negatively the political, social and economic development of the States concerned. I am speaking on behalf of a country directly affected by a protracted, unresolved frozen conflict. Moreover, the territorial integrity of some United Nations Member States — in Europe, these are Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine — has been compromised and their sovereignty repeatedly violated.

What is clearly needed for European and global peace and security at this critical juncture is a strong reaffirmation by the General Assembly and actual implementation by the Security Council of imperative United Nations norms and principles of international law. We expect the Security Council's members, particularly the permanent members, not only to react but also to act promptly and impartially whenever peace and security are threatened and when — I again underline — the principles of international law, in particular the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Member States, are disregarded.

I would like to take this opportunity to emphasize the need to arrive at a common understanding in regard to the secessionist entities outside national and international law. It should be stressed that some of those secessionist entities are not just so-called parties to a conflict, but also the by-products of broader geopolitical games — a fact that explains why they are unwilling to arrive at a negotiated solution. In this regard, confidence-building measures, including the economic and financial incentives associated with and meant to underpin them, will not be sufficient in relation to some protracted conflicts unless the geopolitical triggers that started them in the first place are defused.

Despite the quasi-unanimous perception that the Transnistrian conflict, compared to other conflicts in our geographical area, would be the easiest to resolve, after almost 25 years of political we have not yet succeeded in getting closer to a solution. In that regard, and bearing in mind that all the international actors in the 5+2 format are represented here in this Chamber, I would like to thank the mediators, Ukraine and the Russian Federation, the observers of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the European Union and the United States for their tireless efforts to contribute to advancing towards identifying a political solution to the conflict in the framework described by all the speakers who have referred to the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict through a political solution based on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Moldova, with a special status for Transnistria. In

that regard, I should also like to emphasize that the withdrawal of foreign troops from the Republic of Moldova could be an additional element to advance the settlement process.

The capacity of the Council to uphold international law rather than geopolitical interests, is crucial to the smaller States that make up the majority of the United Nations. In this regard, we believe that the presumed need to reform the Security Council will increase with each unresolved matter. I therefore want to express our hope that today's debate will contribute to advancing conflict resolution in Europe, despite the challenges ahead of us, as well as the advancement of the United Nations.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Latvia.

Mr. Pelis (Latvia): First, I would like to convey my condolences to the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation on the sudden passing away of the Permanent Representative, Ambassador Vitaly Churkin.

I should like to thank the Ukrainian presidency for organizing today's debate on conflicts in Europe. I should like also to thank the Secretaries General of all three organizations — the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Union External Action Service — for their remarks.

In many respects, Europe is characterized by peace, stability and prosperity. However, Europe is not immune to security and stability challenges. Since the beginning of the century, we have witnessed serious breaches of the rules of international security. The ongoing conflict in the eastern part of Ukraine is the most recent threat to the security of Europe. The protracted conflicts in Nagorno Karabakh, Transnistria, Abkhazia and South Ossetia remind us that this is no time for international complacency.

Universal respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty is enshrined in the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter; it must be adhered to by all. All States Members of the United Nations have committed to renouncing the illegal threat or use of force, and all have agreed to settle their disputes by peaceful means. But Russia's actions in Ukraine are a blatant violation of international law and a serious challenge to the principles of the United Nations Charter. Three years ago, Russia occupied Crimea. The international community has witnessed similar acts of aggression committed by Russia and Georgia as recently as in 2008.

We must return to the rules-based security order in Europe. There is no universal solution when it comes to the resolution of active and protracted conflicts, but clear consequences for the aggressor, resolute international pressure and accountability for violations of international law can be very useful in facilitating the de-escalation and the political resolution of conflicts.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the European Union as regional organizations have a natural role in resolving conflicts in Europe, and we expect these organizations, together with the United Nations, to actively engage in conflict resolution. All parties must remain committed to the international instruments for peaceful conflict resolution, and that includes support for and the facilitation of the unhindered deployment of United Nations, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and European Union international missions. It is unacceptable for territories of conflict to be inaccessible to international monitoring mechanisms.

In order to prevent escalation, the Security Council should pay closer attention to existing conflicts in Europe. The veto-wielding Security Council members have not only the privilege but also, and mainly, the responsibility to work in the interest of common peace and security. Their national interests must not hamper constructive efforts to fulfil their role as permanent members. We appreciate the United Nations Secretary-General's participation today and his continuous appeal for peace and for the settlement of all conflicts. We call on him to use all the tools at his disposal to preserve the rules-based international order and to restore it where it has been broken.

A peaceful resolution of the conflict in Ukraine that respects Ukraine's independence and territorial integrity must remain high on the international agenda. Latvia will remain vocal as concerns our indisputable non-recognition policy of the illegal annexation of Crimea.

Unfortunately, there has been no progress towards the resolution of the conflict. The latest escalation of violence by Russia-supported separatists in eastern Ukraine and Russia's decision to recognize the so-called passports issued by separatists in the Luhansk and Donetsk regions undermines the Minsk agreements.

Latvia reiterates that the full implementation of the Minsk agreements remains our unchanged benchmark. The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission must continue observing and assisting the progress made in implementation. The monitoring officers must be granted full, safe and unrestricted access to all conflict-affected areas, including the disengagement zones, heavy-armaments storage sites and the Russian-Ukrainian border. We also believe that the Normandy format must continue its efforts to bring the devastation in eastern Ukraine to an end.

Let me say by way of conclusion that the settlement of protracted conflicts in wider Europe remains of the utmost importance. More efforts and, mainly, political will are needed to achieve a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Georgia, the Transnistrian conflict and the Nagorno Karabakh conflict.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Efendiev.

Mr. Efendiev: I am honoured to speak on behalf of the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development-GUAM, which is a regional initiative of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

At the outset, let me thank the delegation of Ukraine for having organized this high-level debate on "Maintenance of international peace and security: conflicts in Europe" and for providing us with an opportunity to add our voice and share our vision on this important topic from our particular region's perspective.

This year GUAM is celebrating its twentieth anniversary. Since its establishment, the organization's activities have been aimed at fostering stability and regional cooperation in the Black Sea and Caspian region by promoting democracy, trade and economic development, and energy and transport links, as well as tourism and culture among GUAM member States and their partners. This endeavour, in addition to the joint initiatives to counter terrorism and transnational organized crime, will ultimately contribute to the attainment of the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

The role of GUAM as an observer organization and its place in the network of regional cooperation has been acknowledged through the respective General Assembly biannual resolutions on cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development — GUAM. Let me assure the Council that we remain open to active, multifaceted cooperation based on shared principles and values.

The achievements and successes registered in the fields of the major activities of the Organization have been significantly overshadowed by the unresolved conflicts in the GUAM area, both protracted and newly emerged, which erode the security and stability system across Europe and beyond. Perhaps better than many others in this Chamber, the GUAM member States, with their 60 million inhabitants, can testify to the threats and challenges that accompany conflicts. The existing conflicts on the territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine undermine their sovereignty and territorial integrity and have adverse implications for peace, security and cooperation at both the regional and wider European levels. These conflicts have affected the lives of millions of people in the GUAM countries — whether forcibly displaced, unable to return to their places of residence or residing in conflict-affected territories — who are in need of protection, assistance and support.

The GUAM member States are convinced that the peaceful resolution of those conflicts will contribute immensely to comprehensive and lasting security in Europe. The role of international mediation mechanisms in conflict prevention and peaceful resolution therefore become more critical. The GUAM member States strongly believe that the resolution of the conflicts on their territories within, as appropriate, the Geneva international discussions, the Trilateral Contact Group, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Minsk Group and the 5+2 talks on the Transnistrian settlement, exclusively on the basis of the norms and principles of international law — respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of the internationally recognized borders of States — are vital and imperative for sustainable peace and stability in the region.

Meanwhile, the international community should be vocal and united in restoring the territorial integrity of GUAM member States, ensuring the de-occupation of the temporarily occupied territories, as well as safeguarding the fundamental right of internally displaced persons and refugees to a safe and dignified return to their places of residence, as a durable solution for forcibly displaced persons remains a key challenge to be addressed across the GUAM area.

Resolving armed conflicts is also a principal prerequisite for the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which underscores that there can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development.

In the face of daunting obstacles, the United Nations remains an indispensable forum for addressing the ever-complex challenges we are facing. For us, it is very important to obtain support for GUAM initiatives under the General Assembly agenda item on "Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development".

We fully support the appeal for peace by the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, made on 1 January 2017, and believe that through cooperation, joint efforts and political will, we can overcome the multitude of current challenges and pave the way for sustainable peace and development.

The President: I thank Mr. Efendiev for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Germany.

Mr. Erler (Germany): First, allow me to extend, on behalf of Germany, my most sincere condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of Ambassador Churkin of the Russian Federation.

We are grateful to the Ukrainian presidency for convening today's debate. To politicians of my generation, the term "conflicts in Europe" is historically charged. After all, the United Nations was founded as a reaction to the Second World War, which started with Germany's aggression against its neighbours in Europe.

The hopes the United Nations stood for were initially not fulfilled in Europe. During the Cold War, Europe was divided and the Security Council was paralysed more often than not, when numerous conflicts persisted all over the world. However, the faultlines in Europe were frozen. But paradoxically, at the very moment the Cold War ended, conflict returned to Europe, with wars breaking out over the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union.

Our initial reactions were too slow. We had to relearn how to cope with refugee crises, humanitarian challenges, war crimes, ethnic hatred and shifting lines of conflict. In the Western Balkans, we eventually began to achieve success, thanks to the coordinated efforts of the international community, including the European Union (EU), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), NATO and, of course, the United Nations, with its Security Council, all working together. The region is now heading towards a better future. And the United Nations and regional organizations now have a much better toolbox for dealing with crises of the kind.

However, in other parts of Europe, too many conflicts persist: Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova and Nagorn0 Karabakh, and it is there that the United Nations and the OSCE must be at the forefront of conflict resolution.

Germany took on the chairmanship of the OSCE in 2016, with a special focus on conflict resolution. We sought to strengthen existing conflict-resolution formats, to contribute to confidence-building and to improve the lives of populations affected by conflict. As a current member of the OSCE Troika, we will continue to give our full support to the Austrian OSCE chairmanship. And after one year at the helm of the biggest regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter, I can confirm — if proof was needed — that the OSCE is particularly well suited to support conflict resolution in Europe. But our experience is also that we need to continue to develop the OSCE's capacities throughout the entire conflict cycle, granting the OSCE international legal status and enabling it to fulfil its potential. We also need to continue to deepen cooperation between the OSCE and the United Nations.

The year 2014 accorded the term "conflicts in Europe" a new quality, calling into question the founding principles of the United Nations, in particular the prohibition of the use of force against the territorial integrity of States Members of the United Nations. The territorial integrity of Ukraine is being violated, most strikingly by the illegal annexation of Crimea. In eastern Ukraine, numerous ceasefire violations continue to take place on a daily basis. The Special Monitoring Mission of the OSCE is on the ground, but it faces many obstacles. It is essential that the Mission enjoy full freedom of movement throughout its mandated area of operation.

Last Saturday, within the framework of the Munich Security Conference and together with our French, Russian and Ukrainian friends and colleagues, we met again in the Normandy format to discuss how to advance the Minsk agenda. France and Germany

continue to be fully committed to their diplomatic efforts and to supporting the process in the framework of the Normandy format.

Despite all difficulties, the Minsk agreements provide the only road map for a peaceful resolution of the conflict. The ultimate aim is to reinstate Ukraine's territorial integrity and return control of its external borders to it, with full respect for the rights of minorities. All sides need to adhere to the agreements, and, most importantly, all sides have to commit to military de-escalation.

Other conflicts in Europe — in Georgia, in Moldova and Nagorno Karabakh — also need to be solved on the basis of international law and OSCE commitments. Especially in Georgia and Nagorno Karabakh, these conflicts are not frozen but continue to destroy lives, threaten our security and deny the affected populations the benefits of peaceful development.

In particular, we fully respect and support the undivided sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders. We also encourage all stakeholders in the Geneva International Discussions — a genuine effort at team-playing by the OSCE, the EU and the United Nations — to make concessions and raise the level of trust through confidence-building measures. We must not relent in our efforts to solve those crises. Germany stands ready to contribute to this end.

I would like to conclude with three points. First, when it comes to the hard and grinding work of conflict prevention, stabilization and post-conflict reconstruction, close cooperation of all actors, among them the United Nations and regional organizations, is of the essence. The OSCE, with its expertise and credibility, is currently at the forefront of efforts to resolve conflicts in Europe. Secondly, the Security Council needs to work in the spirit of cooperation and unity that is a prerequisite for its effective action and that alone justifies the trust the United Nations Charter places in it. Thirdly, we need to return to the founding principles of the United Nations. Now more than ever, in Europe and worldwide, we need to preserve and strengthen the multilateral, rules-based international order that the United Nations epitomizes. Germany will continue to work tirelessly for these very values.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Switzerland.

Mr. Zehnder (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to begin by transmitting my sincere condolences to the Russian Federation after the sudden passing of Ambassador Churkin yesterday.

We thank Ukraine for organizing today's meeting. The ongoing or protracted conflicts in Europe prevent the creation of a common space of security, stability and prosperity throughout the continent. In view of that situation, we value the fruitful cooperation establishedin different settings between the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to address the unresolved conflicts and their consequences.

The illegal annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation and the conflict in eastern Ukraine have caused a major crisis in Europe. In recent weeks we have seen upsurge in ceasefire violations. The conflict in eastern part of the country has already left nearly 10,000 people dead, including many civilians.

Switzerland notes with concern a lack of respect by the parties so far for their obligations under international humanitarian law. The way hostilities are being conducted has led to a rising death toll among civilians and the destruction of things needed for their survival. The humanitarian and human rights situations in the conflict area are precarious. For Switzerland, greater political will is indispensable for implementing the agreements reached in the OSCE Trilateral Contact Group and in the Normandy format, including the understanding reached on 18 February in Munich. Switzerland calls all sides to respect international humanitarian law and allow humanitarian access. All sides must adhere to the ceasefire and the other commitments made in the Minsk agreements.

With respect to Georgia, the United Nations, the European Union and the OSCE continue to co-facilitate the Geneva International Discussions, which are a good example of effective cooperation among these three organizations. The discussions have in fact recently allowed for the resumption of the Gali Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism after a four-year interruption.

The Nagorno Karabakh region saw an upsurge in violence in April last year. Post-crisis diplomacy prevented the large-scale use of force. Nonetheless, ceasefire violations are still all too frequent. The co-Chairs of the Minsk Group continue to do their utmost to prevent a worsening of the situation.

Switzerland believes that more intense, structured negotiations to arrive at a comprehensive settlement could pave the way for a peaceful solution.

With regard to the process for resolving the Transnistrian conflict, in June last year the German presidency of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) managed to restart the official 5+2 negotiations, after a two-year break. The parties have reaffirmed their willingness to hold regular meetings, and we commend their commitment.

In the Western Balkans, several recent incidents have affected relations between Belgrade and Pristina, such as the sispatch of a train from Belgrade to northern Kosovo. Such tensions are of concern. Switzerland welcomes the commitment shown by authorities in Belgrade and Pristina, with a view to continuing talks in Brussels within the high-level dialogue to normalize relations, facilitated by the European Union.

For Switzerland, the intensification of the dialogue among the parties on the question of Cyprus is encouraging. We thank the United Nations for its commitment to help find a solution to that issue. To date, Switzerland has hosted several rounds of negotiations in Mont Pèlerin and Geneva, and we stand ready to continue our efforts in support of the process.

Let me underscore four ways in which the United Nations could respond to conflicts in Europe.

First, the notion of sustaining peace offers a comprehensive new approach to addressing conflicts, also applicable to Europe. Although the traditional notion of peacebuilding is linked, above all, to post-conflict situations, lasting peace encompasses the entire cycle of conflicts.

Secondly, the United Nations is best placed to provide global experiences related to sustaining peace that could be beneficial to Europe. In 2015, the Secretary-General published a report (A/70/328) to promote the partnership between the United Nations and regional organizations to build mediation capacity. In Europe, the OSCE has established its own Mediation Support Unit, with significant support from Switzerland.

Thirdly, the United Nations has enormous experience in assisting people affected by conflict, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which continues to play a key role. We must do all in our power to reduce the suffering of people affected by conflict.

Fourthly, for many years the United Nations has been working with regional players, including the OSCE and the European Union. Its experience would be useful in the areas of early warning and the deployment of special political missions. Switzerland believes that preventive diplomacy must be strengthened, and organizations such as the OSCE must benefit from the experience of the United Nations.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

Mr. Vieira (Brazil): First of all, I would like to express the Brazilian Government's sadness over the death of Ambassador Vitaly Churkin. We extend our condolences to his family and to the Government and the people of the Russian Federation, as well as to the staff members of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations. We will all deeply miss Ambassador Churkin, who was a distinguished diplomat and a good friend.

I thank you, Mr. President, for organizing today's open debate and the Secretary-General, Mr. Zannier and Ms. Schmid for their briefings.

Recent and protracted conflicts in Europe constitute a matter of concern for the entire international community. They threaten regional stability and international peace and security. Two devastating wars began in apparently minor clashes on the European continent, and they soon became systemic disruptions. This Organization and this Council were created precisely to avoid another tragedy of such proportions.

As history shows us, stability in the Balkans remains a challenging and important goal. Brazil is firmly committed to preserving stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina and has supported all efforts to strengthen the State at the national level, while preserving the rights and prerogatives of all communal entities. Recent tensions involving the Republika Srpska must be tackled in the context of the full implementation of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in the country, with the full support of the international community, including with regard to socioeconomic development.

Brazil also reaffirms its belief that resolution 1244 (1999) offers the appropriate framework for a negotiated settlement that can address tensions in Kosovo. We are confident that a fair and legitimate solution can be reached under the auspices of the Security Council through the support of the United Nations Interim

Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and regional organizations, and we encourage a continuing dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, bearing in mind the most pressing threats mentioned in the last Secretary-General's report on UNMIK (S/2016/901).

Brazil has stated its utmost concern about the gravity of the situation in Ukraine since the very early stages of the crisis. We are particularly troubled by the intensification of hostilities since January, considering its humanitarian impact and potential consequences. Brazil renews its support for the peaceful solution represented by the Minsk agreements, as endorsed by resolution 2202 (2015), and urges all parties to fully implement them, as well as to keep engaged in constructive talks that take diversity in account and respect the rights of all Ukrainians, including minorities. We also call for all stakeholders to exercise maximum restraint.

Brazil expects that the crisis in Georgia can be resolved peaceably in the shortest time possible. We believe that confidence-building measures and initiatives to foster cooperation should be pursued by all parties, particularly in the framework of the Geneva process.

With regard to the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, we reiterate our support for the relevant Security Council resolutions and to the peace process conducted by the OSCE's Minsk Group, and we urge all parties to strengthen their dialogue to reach a settlement.

On Cyprus, Brazil welcomes the renewed efforts undertaken by both parties to intensify diplomatic negotiations in pursuit of a lasting solution. We welcomed the holding of the Geneva Conference in January, with the participation of the Secretary-General, as well as the meeting of Mr. Nicos Anastasiades and Mr. Mustafa Akinci with Special Adviser Espen Barth Eide. It is our hope that that constructive spirit will pave the way to sustained peace after decades of impasse. At this advanced and promising stage of the political dialogue, both sides should display flexibility and refrain from actions that could become hurdles in the overall process.

The Charter of the United Nations was conceived precisely to provide the instruments to avoid the recurrence of war. Brazil has consistently upheld that the Charter should be respected, including its principles of the peaceful settlement of disputes and respect for the territorial integrity of States. We should honour all those who perished in the appalling conflicts prior to the creation of the United Nations, in Europe and elsewhere. This Council has a pivotal role to play in helping all Member States not to forget the lessons history taught us not so long ago.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Belarus.

Mr. Dapkiunas (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Vitaly Ivanovich Churkin died yesterday. He was a leading Russian diplomat and a key figure in the Security Council, representing his country in a mature manner for more than a decade. We mourn the loss of our colleague and friend. We extend our condolences to his family and friends. We are grateful to the members of the Security Council for the words of condolences that they expressed on what is a loss to us all. At the same time, it must be recognized that the President of the Security Council did not use this opportunity to pay tribute to the doyen of the Security Council with a statement from the President, as would have been appropriate.

Today, one would have thought that the topic of conflicts in Europe would long ago have become an outdated absurdity. Unfortunately, it is an ominous reality. We seem to have forgotten the horrific lessons of the two world wars that broke out precisely on the European continent. We sincerely hope that there are no members of the United Nations that seek war, and that we are all interested in strengthening international dialogue and improving understanding among nations. So then why are we unable to use Council discussions as ways to find peace rather than just another opportunity to exert public pressure and launch embarrassing mutual accusations?

In our opinion, the reason for that is that today — seven decades after the last world war — we have apparently lost the acute sense of the possibility of yet another global military disaster. And this time it would indeed be the final one in the history of mankind. We have far too recklessly placed faith in the reliability of mechanisms intended to prevent a man-made apocalypse and in the infallibility of common sense and the instinct of self-preservation. Unfortunately, history teaches us that those mechanisms do not work under conditions characterized by mutual alienation and the lack of even minimal trust or willingness to compromise, and where there is the tendency to demonize our opponents. Those mechanisms will not

be able to stop us from sliding into a global conflict as long as we believe in our monopoly on the truth and righteousness — a monopoly that, by definition, can only belong to us and never to our opponents.

However, those mechanisms are powerless unless the major world Powers and their leaders find the civil and moral courage to start a direct conversation with one another about their shared responsibility to prevent a new world confrontation, whether it be a cold one or a hot one. If we do not accept the responsibility to abolish the right arrogated by the stronger parties in world politics, then we at least have the responsibility to adjust that right in line with considerations of humanity, solidarity, empathy and compassion.

Today, the world — including its representatives in the United Nations — badly needs fresh, broad discussions on the principles of the future coexistence of countries and peoples. And such discussions should certainly touch upon the conflicts in Europe, military and security confidence-building measures. As was the case 40 years ago, when the Helsinki Process was what was needed to defuse tension and reduce the degree of hostility, once again similar, decisive measures are now required to overcome global alienation. Candid global conversations on a new détente are now necessary, and we believe that there is an urgent need for frank — not merely ceremonial — and results-oriented dialogue, primarily in the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), on the causes of the international crisis of responsibility and on the ways of overcoming it. We do not need secret, propaganda-style sallies into the media, exchanges of resolutions or ceremonial summits every five years. We need regular, personal meetings of the most courageous and responsible world leaders in order to define the new rules of a multipolar world. We also need to find ways to ensure mutual respect for one another's interests, and to recognize diversity and the variety of ways in which the progressive development of human civilization can be achieved.

Belarus has a credible record of unbiased participation in such processes. The country is a welcoming place for international communication, and Belarusians — as dedicated advocates of international dialogue and its unbiased organizers — are ready and willing to continue to fulfil that role actively and in good faith.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Estonia.

Mr. Jürgenson (Estonia): First of all, allow me to extend my deepest condolences to the delegation of the Russian Federation with regard to the passing of Ambassador Vitaly Churkin.

I would like to start by thanking the Ukrainian presidency for organizing this timely discussion today on a very important topic. It is the harsh reality that in too many parts of the world we find emerging, raging or frozen conflicts. We also have to face that reality in Europe. The ongoing and protracted conflicts in Europe pose a risk to stability and security at the regional and global levels. They obstruct the socioeconomic development of our countries and regions, and impede the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Sometimes those conflicts are referred to as "frozen", which is clearly a misnomer. As we have unfortunately seen time and again, such conflicts can easily flare up. However, it is not the conflicts, but the conflict-settlement processes that tend to be frozen.

We all know that the prohibition on the use of force and the respect for the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of Member States lies at the heart of the Charter of the United Nations. Those principles have our firmest support. Other regional organizations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in particular, also have a crucial role to play in supporting the rule-based international order in Europe. The security order in Europe has been dented but not dismantled. The existing system works, provided that all participating States adhere to the principles and commitments that it rests on, and provided that all States do so not only in principle but also in practice.

We need to find a solution to the conflict in Ukraine. It is quite clear what needs to be done. The Minsk agreements must be carried out, and a sustainable settlement must be found within the framework of the existing negotiation formats. For the first time since the Second World War, borders in Europe have been changed through the use of force. Russia must withdraw its forces from Ukraine, allow Ukraine to restore control over its border and territory, and end the illegal annexation of Crimea.

We also remain concerned about the de facto annexation of the Tskhinvali and Abkhazia regions of Georgia. Foreign forces should be withdrawn from those regions. Russia should abide by its commitments under

international law and the 12 August 2008 ceasefire agreement, and engage constructively in the Geneva International Discussions. We support the efforts of the ongoing conflict-resolution processes, namely, the Minsk Group seeking to find a peaceful resolution to the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, and the 5+2 talks on the Transnistrian settlement process. Sometimes the lack of progress in those formats has been frustrating. That is why genuine political will and good faith is needed from all sides.

Not all of the conflicts in Europe could have been prevented, yet the effect of many of those conflicts could have been mitigated, had we acted sooner. We all know that the Security Council has as its primary responsibility, under the Charter of the United Nations, the maintenance of international peace and security. As such, the Council bears the important responsibility for preventing conflicts and for having the capacity and readiness to adequately respond to them. Unfortunately, we have had to witness, on numerous occasions, how some members of the Council have used or threatened to use the veto, and by doing so, have left the Council paralysed and unable to act in situations where action is urgently needed. That has led to the significant loss of life and the displacement of millions of people, and to unprecedented human suffering.

In 2005, the States Members of the United Nations committed to the principle of the responsibility to protect. When a Government fails to live up to its commitments or when it violates the fundamental norms of international law, the international community must act. The Security Council must act. That is why Estonia has expressed before and continues to highlight its position, namely, that the permanent members of the Security Council should voluntarily and collectively commit not to use their veto to block Council action aimed at preventing or ending situations involving mass atrocity crimes.

The President: I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of the Holy See to the United Nations.

Archbishop Auza (Holy See): I would like to express the deepest sympathies of my delegation to the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation at the passing of Ambassador Vitaly Churkin.

With this intervention the Holy See wishes to reiterate its closeness to and solidarity with all peoples afflicted by conflicts and aggression of any kind, including so-called hybrid wars and frozen situations. At the same time, it is the obligation of States to refrain from actions that destabilize neighbouring countries and work together to create the necessary conditions for peace and reconciliation. The Holy See has been and remains deeply concerned that, after the tragedies of two world wars and the positive experience of European integration and security cooperation, Europe continues to be a theatre of conflicts causing great distress to entire populations, like those in Cyprus, in the Balkans and in the Caucasus.

Concerning the conflict in Ukraine, which continues to cause grave concern since it began in 2014, the Holy See underscores once again that all necessary steps should be taken to enforce the ceasefire and to implement the measures agreed upon. These efforts should be accompanied by the sincere commitment of all parties involved to respecting all fundamental human rights and restoring stability at the national and international levels, not least by respecting international legality with regard to Ukraine's territory and borders.

By committing itself to offering direct humanitarian assistance to the population of the affected areas, the Holy See stresses the need to protect civilians and the urgency of making every possible effort to avoid the continuation of this unresolved conflict and to find a political solution through dialogue and negotiation. In this regard, the Holy See continues to welcome every effort of the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and other relevant organizations to promote peace throughout Europe, including in Ukraine.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Poland.

Mr. Radomski (Poland): At the outset, let me express our sincere condolences to the Russian delegation on the sudden passing away of Russia's Permanent Representative, Ambassador Vitaly Churkin. At this hour of sadness and disbelief, our deepest sympathies go to his family and the Mission of the Russian Federation in New York.

I thank you, Mr. President, for organizing today's debate with a focus on conflicts in Europe.

Poland fully agrees with the position of the European Union presented at the beginning of our meeting by Ms. Helga Schmid, Secretary General of the European External Action Service of the European

Union. Allow me to present additional comments in my national capacity.

We fully share the analyses presented in the Ukrainian concept note (S/2017/108, annex) prepared ahead of this meeting. New challenges and threats have certainly emerged in Europe in recent years. Our major concern is that we have seen European security architecture undermined by a new type of threats and conflicts that pose serious risks to rules-based order. Now, you, Mr. President, asked an important question: how should we respond to these challenges and threats? Let me focus on three issues: principles, the role of regional organizations and the Security Council.

First, with regard to principles, we believe in a world that is based on the rule of law and not the law of the mighty. President of Poland Andrzej Duda underlined this notion in his addresses to the General Assembly during two previous general debates (see A/71/PV.9 and A/70/PV.13). We must categorically reject aggression and any use of force between States. Europe is no exception, but rather — having the tragic legacy of two world wars — should serve as an example of the peaceful settlement of disputes.

State sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence and the inviolability of borders are the cornerstones of both the Charter of the United Nations and the Helsinki Final Act. Regrettably, we have not seen these basic principles observed in the cases of illegal referendum, annexation and the occupation of Ukrainian Crimea, nor in the eastern parts of Ukraine that faced aggression and war imposed from the outside by neighbouring Russia. As a result, since the start of hostilities in 2014, we have witnessed 10,000 people killed, refugees, internally displaced persons and civilian populations affected by the military operations. Today, still, 3.8 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, as assessed by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The territorial integrity and full sovereignty of Ukraine are key to European security and we definitely need to stand by it. The use of military pressure cannot be accepted at the negotiating table. The Minsk agreements have to be fully implemented and Russia bears a special responsibility in this regard. We also call on Russia to use its influence on separatists to ensure the full implementation of their obligations.

Other areas of protracted conflict that call for our attention are Georgia's regions of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, which remain illegally occupied by neighbouring Russia. Any attempts to change internationally recognized borders through so-called referendums or illegal treaties must never be recognized by the international community.

There is yet another principle that we find important from the European perspective and would like to highlight today, namely, the protection of members of ethnic and religious minorities. Europe has both a rich tradition of cooperation and a tragic history of conflicts and tensions on ethnic and religious grounds. The peaceful coexistence of different nations and religions is especially vital for stability in the Balkan region.

Let me now turn to the role of regional organizations. Throughout decades we developed in Europe a wide network of regional and subregional organizations and initiatives with the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Council of Europe as the most prominent examples. They have at their disposal different tools for the peaceful settlement of disputes, from consultations, dialogue, mediation and confidence-building measures to observer missions and judicial framework. Once a situation or conflict arises, members should make every effort to effectively use these mechanisms. The Security Council should further strengthen its relationship with these organizations, especially on issues that are discussed both by the Council and regional organizations.

For instance, in the case of the conflict in Ukraine, OSCE, through its Special Monitoring Mission, is the only international organization present in the conflict zone. We strongly support the efforts of the OSCE. It is clear that more international presence in Ukrainian Donbas might help to calm the situation. OSCE observers must have full and unhindered access to be able to implement the Mission's mandate, including to the demilitarized areas and the Ukrainian-Russian border. The OSCE also plays a significant role in the resolution of other protracted conflicts in Transnistria and Nagorno Karabakh.

Last but not least, I would like to say a few words about the Security Council. Poland believes that conflicts can and should be prevented or mitigated by early, well-suited political and diplomatic engagement. Where the Security Council demonstrates political will and acts unanimously, good results will follow. But when its work is hampered by the use or threat of use of the veto, conflicts remain unresolved and last for years.

We should recall again and again that the privilege of being a permanent member of the Council is inherently interlinked with an obligation to take actions aimed at the fulfilment of the principles and purposes of the United Nations. The veto must not lead to the Council's deadlock in the most pressing security issues.

The President: I now give the floor to the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan.

Mr. Aliyev (Azerbaijan) (*spoke in Russian*): Allow me to express our sincere condolences to our colleagues at the Russian Federation's Mission to the United Nations and to the family of Mr.Churkin, who passed away.

(*spoke in English*)

My delegation thanks the Ukrainian presidency for having organized this open debate on the very important and pressing topic of conflicts in Europe. We are also grateful to the Secretary-General for his remarks. I would like to take this opportunity to express once again my country's full support for his appeal of 1 January for peace and our determination to genuinely contribute to joint efforts towards making this year, 2017, a year for peace.

Strict compliance with the general accepted norms and principles of international law guiding inter-State relations and the fulfilment in good faith of obligations assumed by States are imperatives to that end. However, that objective is hardly accomplishable if those norms and principles are misinterpreted, conditioned or implemented with reservations, if not altogether neglected, while some of them are referred to in order to cover up aggressions, atrocities and ethnic cleansing.

At the end of 1991 and the beginning of 1992, both Armenia and Azerbaijan obtained their independence and were accorded international recognition. The groundless Armenian territorial claim against my country escalated into a full-fledged inter-State war. As a result, a significant part of my country's territory, including the Nagorno Karabakh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan — a region of the Republic of Azerbaijan, not of the South Caucasus, not of Transcaucasus or of anywhere else — and the seven adjacent districts of Lachin, Kalbajar, Zangilan, Qubadli, Jabrayil, Fizuli and Agdam, and other exclaves were occupied by Armenia. Serous violations of international humanitarian law amounting to war crimes, crimes against humanity and acts of genocide were committed in the course of the aggression. The war claimed the lives of tens of thousands of people, ruined cities and livelihoods and resulted in the forcible expulsion of more than 1 million Azerbaijanis from their homes and properties, while thousands of people went missing in connection with the conflict.

This month marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the atrocious crime committed by the Armenian forces against the civilians and defenders of the town of Khojaly, situated in the Nagorno Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. What happened in Khojaly on the night of 25-26 February 1992 was the largest massacre in the nearly 30-year-old conflict. As a result of the massive artillery bombardment of Khojaly and the subsequent attack on and capture of the town, hundreds of Azerbaijanis, including women, children and the elderly were killed, wounded or taken hostage, while the town was razed to the ground. That mass killing was committed less than a month after the Security Council recommended to the General Assembly the admission of the Republic of Armenia for membership to the United Nations and, in that regard, recalled in a note by the President "Armenia's solemn commitment to uphold the Purposes and Principles of the Charter, which include the principles relating to the peaceful settlement of disputes and the non-use of force". This is in document S/23496, of 29 January 1992.

Later in 1993, in this very Chamber, the Security Council unanimously adopted four resolutions — resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993) — condemning the occupation of the territories of Azerbaijan and reaffirming respect for its sovereignty and territorial integrity, the inviolability of international borders and the inadmissibility of the use of force for the acquisition of territory. In response to Armenia's territorial claims and actions, the Council reconfirmed that the Nagorno Karabakh region is an integral part of Azerbaijan and demanded the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of the occupying forces from all the occupied territories. A series of Security Council presidential statements adopted between 1992 and 1995 and documents of other authoritative international organizations are framed along the same lines.

Obviously, the Security Council resolutions acknowledge the fact that acts of military force were committed against Azerbaijan; that such acts are unlawful and incompatible with the prohibition of the use of armed force in international relations in

contradiction with the Charter of the United Nations and its purposes; and that they constitute an obvious violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, specifically as pertains to Article 2, paragraph 4 of the Charter.

The Security Council also tasked the Organization — known at that time as the Conference — for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to ensure, in performing its mediation efforts towards the settlement of the conflict, the implementation of those resolutions. In that context, the Chairman of the Minsk Conference, Mr. Mario Raffaelli of Italy, stated that the immediate withdrawal from the seized territories is "the key factor in ensuring that peaceful negotiations can move forward". This is found in the appendix in document S/26184 of 28 July 1993.

It is also pertinent to recall the positions expressed at that time by the three permanent members of the Security Council .who are currently the co-Chairs of the Minsk Group. At the Council's 3258th meeting, on 29 July 1993, in his statement following the adoption of resolution 853 (1993), the representative of the Russian Federation particularly noted that the Azerbaijani town of Agdam had been seized despite assurances to the Russian side by official Armenian representatives that no ground offensive operations would be undertaken and that they did not intend to attack the town. At the same meeting, the representative of the United States of America stated that the seizure of Agdam could not be justified by any claim of self-defence and that that action had disrupted the peace process. Following the adoption of resolution 884 (1993) on 12 November 1993, which condemned the occupation of the Zangelan district and the city of Goradiz and attacks on civilians and bombardments of the territory of Azerbaijan, the representative of France stated, inter alia, that the acquisition of territory by force was inadmissible and doing so for the purposes of negotiations could not be countenanced (see S/PV.3313).

For his part, in 1994 the Secretary-General made it crystal clear that

> "The position of the United Nations is based on four principles which have been mentioned in the different resolutions of the Security Council. The first principle is the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. The second principle is the inviolability of the international boundaries; the third principle is the inadmissibility of the use of force for the acquisition of territory; and the fourth principle is the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all foreign troops from occupied territories of Azerbaijan."

This is from document SG/SM/5460, 31 October 1994.

Unfortunately, the Security Council's key demands have still not been implemented, and the mediation efforts conducted for more than 20 years within the framework of the OSCE have yet to yield results. There is no doubt that Armenia's continued military occupation of the territories of Azerbaijan could not be possible without the sense of impunity that it enjoys despite persistent contempt for international law. As a direct consequence, Armenia has consistently obstructed the conflict-settlement process and, in the meantime refuses to start result-oriented negotiations, while it regularly resorts to various provocations to escalate the situation on the front line and tries to consolidate the status quo by strengthening its military build-up in the seized territories and changing their demographic, cultural and physical character.

Armenia's further provocative attempt yesterday to hold a so-called constitutional referendum in the occupied Nagorno Karabakh region of Azerbaijan and change the geographic name of a part of my country's internationally recognized territory in violation of international law, the Constitution and the legislation of Azerbaijan and the principles and procedures for international standardization of geographical names established within the United Nations, clearly testifies to its policy of annexation of the territories of Azerbaijan and unwillingnessto engage in a constructive search for peace. The international community once again united with Azerbaijan in rejecting this action and its outcomes as null and void.

The presence of the armed forces of Armenia in the occupied territories of my country is the main cause of tensions and incidents on the front line and the major impediment to the political settlement of the conflict. The escalation provoked by Armenia in April 2016 demonstrated that the status quo is unsustainable. It should be particularly noted that, since the very first day of the conflict, combat operations have been conducted exclusively inside the territory of my country, almost in the middle of Azerbaijan, affecting its civilian population and infrastructure.

In their declaration of 9 November 1993, made in response to the seizure of Azerbaijani territories, the nine countries of the OSCE Minsk Group

> "condemn the looting, burning and destruction of villages and towns, which cannot be justified under any standards of civilized behaviour" (*S/26718, p. 3*).

The same policy has been continued up to now. As a result of Armenia's attacks last April, 39 towns and villages in Azerbaijan along the front line were shelled, causing casualties among civilians and servicemen, and either destroying or substantially damaging private and public property, including residential houses, schools and kindergartens.

In its assessment report submitted following a visit in May 2016 to the affected areas in Azerbaijan, a mission of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees found that Azerbaijani villages along the line of contact had been coping with the regular ceasefire violations for the past 20 years and that, since the beginning of April 2016, the situation had changed fundamentally due to the use of new and heavier types of military hardware, inflicting worse damage on Azerbaijani settlements situated behind the front lines.

The leadership of Armenia must realize that the military occupation of a territory of another State Member of the United Nations does not represent a solution, and that its reliance on the status quo is a grave miscalculation. Evidently, this policy does not serve and is detrimental to the real interests, aspirations and well-being of the Armenian people. Azerbaijan will never compromise its territorial integrity or the rights and freedoms of its citizens that are grossly violated as a result of the aggression.

The achievement of peace, security and stability will be possible, first and foremost, only if the consequences of Armenia's occupation are removed, thereby ensuring that its armed forces are immediately, unconditionally and completely withdrawn from the territories of Azerbaijan, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of my country are restored, and the right of internally displaced Azerbaijanis to return to their homes is guaranteed and implemented. That is what international law and the Security Council demand, and can in no way be substituted with semi-measures, made under any pretext, introduced as a compromise or used as a bargaining chip in the conflict-settlement process.

As a country suffering from the occupation of its territories and the forcible displacement of hundreds of thousands of its citizens, Azerbaijan is the party most interested in the earliest political settlement of the conflict, which would ensure peace, justice and development in the region.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Begeç (Turkey): I thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this open debate. I also thank the Secretaries-General for demonstrating, through their participation, a strong commitment to the issue at hand.

The following is a shortened version of our remarks. The full text will be circulated.

It is no secret that this is not the world and state of affairs we were hoping to face 25 years after the end of the Cold War. Conflicts in and around Europe threaten international peace and stability. This should be properly addressed by the Security Council as the primary organ tasked with the maintenance of international peace and security. We support any discussion of the challenges to doing that, including under this format. But first, as delegations speaking before us have done, I wish to put on record briefly our position on these conflicts.

Turkey aligns itself with the statement of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation that will be delivered by the representative of Uzbekistan on the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. The conflict continues to be the most important impediment to peace, stability and cooperation in the South Caucasus. As a member of the Organization for Security and Cooperation (OSCE) Minsk Group, Turkey will continue to support all efforts to find a just and viable solution to the conflict through peaceful means and in respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Azerbaijan.

We support all efforts aimed at finding a peaceful solution to the situation in Ukraine, including Crimea, based on Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and international law. The full adherence of all parties to the Minsk agreements is still the only way forward. Turkey does not and will not recognize the illegal annexation of Crimea. We pay special attention to the security and the development of the Crimean Tatars.

The international community should remain vigilant about the potential challenges that threaten both the political stability and security in the Balkans.

Turkey fully supports Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty. We will contribute to any effort that will resolve the conflict peacefully. On the other hand, any step that would hamper Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty will not be welcomed.

Of course, each conflict has its unique characteristic, which is why opinions and analogies among them are often misleading, but never helpful. Nevertheless, there have been ample words of encouragement and support by delegations to the settlement process of the Cyprus issue. We are more than pleased to take note of them. Needless to say, as the motherland and guarantor, Turkey is fully committed to efforts for a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement to the Cyprus issue that would bring about a bicameral and bicommunal federation, based on the political equality of two sides. We hope that the latest chance for the establishment of a new partnership State on the island will be seized, and that the Cyprus issue will come to a conclusion without further delay. We believe that a Cyprus settlement would also contribute to peace, stability and cooperation in the eastern Mediterranean and the wider region.

We also wish to contribute to the discussion by sharing our views and recommendations on the question in the President's concept note (S/2017/108, annex). In most cases, chronic conflicts are sustained due to a lack of will on the part of at least one side to the conflict. But the problem of a lack of political will is not restricted to the parties of the conflict; it extends to the very members of the Security Council. The Council possesses the necessary mandate and most of the tools to prevent and manage conflicts. However, in most cases, the failure to take action arises from the threat or use of veto by a member.

That is why the Council needs to be reformed. Turkey, as a member of the Uniting for Consensus group, supports a model that foresees an expansion of the number of elected members only. But the threat or use of the veto is a pressing issue even beyond the discussion of reform. It is closely related to the working methods of the Council in its current format. We support initiatives aimed at limiting the use of the veto or a negative veto, such as in cases of mass atrocities.

United Nations cooperation with other organizations, including NATO, the OSCE and the European Union contributes to the maintenance of peace and security. Other measures that can help the Council better respond to conflicts could be, inter alia, keeping the right balance between thematic debates and conflict-specific situations; revisiting the penholder system to increase the interaction among Council members, particularly with the non-permanent members; and using the available tools, such as visiting missions, more efficiently.

The Security Council has the primary role in maintaining international peace and security. Tackling the obstacles that hinder the Council's ability to perform its most crucial duty is an urgent necessity. We believe that today's discussion has been fruitful in helping us to understand the nature of these obstacles.

Before I conclude, let me reiterate our deepest condolences to the delegation of the Russian Federation for the passing of Ambassador Churkin.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Norway.

Mr. Pedersen (Norway): I would first like to express my heartfelt condolences to his family, friends and colleagues at the Russian Mission on the passing of Ambassador Vitaly Churkin. Ambassador Churkin was a highly respected colleague who sought to find solutions through compromise and great diplomatic skill. I always appreciated our conversations. We have lost an extraordinary diplomat and friend. May he rest in peace.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Sweden and my own country, Norway.

Europe has seen much conflict but also groundbreaking cooperation. A robust, comprehensive and inclusive security architecture with the European Union (EU), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), NATO and the Council of Europe has ensured peace in most of Europe since the close of the Second World War. The United Nations must cooperate closely with all those partners in order to address ongoing conflicts and prevent future ones. However, Europe is now facing serious challenges and attempts to undermine that rule-based order. Russia's aggression against Ukraine, as demonstrated in its ongoing violations of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol, constitutes a clear violation of international law.

Apart from the unique role played by the OSCE and the support provided by the European Union,

international efforts have not been sufficient. We call on the Security Council, the Secretary-General and the whole United Nations to assess what more can be done to restore security and respect for Ukraine's sovereignty, unity, independence and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. We must see concrete steps taken to implement the Minsk agreements. We commend and fully support the Normandy format efforts.

Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity have been severely compromised, in breach of the Charter of the United Nations. We call for access for international human rights mechanisms to Georgia's breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In many conflicts, multilateral organizations are hindered from fulfilling their role. In Abkhazia, the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia was terminated, and other institutions have not been allowed meaningful access. The Geneva international discussions must continue, and the Security Council resolutions on Nagorno Karabakh must be implemented.

The United Nations has been directly engaged in Cyprus from the start of the conflict. The Secretary-General's good offices and patient support have now produced real prospects for genuine progress. We commend him for his focus on diplomacy for peace. We remain convinced that when allowed to fulfil its mandate, the Security Council can play an important role in conflict prevention and in upholding a rule-based international order.

The OSCE is also playing a unique role in Moldova. The resumption of the 5+2 negotiations on Transnistria has demonstrated the value of an OSCE-led small-steps approach. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the international community intervened successfully to assist national authorities after an early warning from the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, which probably prevented a wider conflict. An ounce of prevention was worth a pound of cure. In Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the active presence of the United Nations, the EU, the OSCE, NATO and others has provided security and facilitated reconciliation between peoples. Regional cooperation is the key to development and prosperity.

The Nordic countries will continue to promote the effective participation of women and the agenda on women and peace and security wherever there are discussions of peace and security. We urge the Council to work to ensure that gender equality and women's rights are an integral part of its work, as they increase legitimacy and the possibilities for lasting peace.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Liechtenstein.

Mr. Sparber (Liechtenstein): I would like to begin by expressing Liechtenstein's deep sympathies to the Russian delegation on the passing of Ambassador Churkin. Our thoughts are with his wife and family as well as his friends and his colleagues at the Russian Mission.

Liechtenstein welcomes today's open debate on conflicts in Europe and would like to thank Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin for his presence here earlier today.

After the Second World War, which originated in Europe, our region underwent successful political and economic integration and the European Union continues to be an important element of stability and an actor for peace. Unfortunately, since the 1990s we have also witnessed a proliferation of conflicts in Europe, and today we are facing an overall security situation that is deteriorating. Armed conflict has re-emerged in Europe with the crisis in and around Ukraine, while situations of protracted conflict in Georgia, Moldova and Nagorno Karabakh have been simmering for years without approaching a solution. The inability to achieve reconciliation in parts of the Balkans constitutes yet another risk to sustainable peace in our region. At the same time, important safeguards for peace and security, such as the rule of law, human rights and democratic standards, are under strain and long-standing security arrangements are being undermined. Geopolitical uncertainty is on the rise and has already contributed to a new arms race, the hardening of national security postures and escalating nationalist and populist rhetoric.

Liechtenstein is deeply concerned about the escalating violence in eastern Ukraine, which is putting the local population through yet more unacceptable hardships in these merciless winter days. The levels of violence we have recently witnessed are in stark contravention of the obligations by the signatories to the Minsk agreements. Ensuring full adherence to the agreements must therefore be a priority for the international community, starting with an immediate and verifiable ceasefire, fully monitored by the OSCE's Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine. With the Special Monitoring Mission and the Trilateral Contact

Group, the OSCE continues to lead efforts to foster stability and mediate for a solution to the crisis.

At a time of declining commitment to a political discourse based on facts, the OSCE also stands out for its objective reporting and resistance to politicization. Its work on the ground makes an important contribution to promoting peace and security in the spirit of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, and we hope that the Security Council will acknowledge that role by expressing strong political support for the OSCE and insisting on full implementation of the Minsk agreements when it engages tomorrow with Mr. Sebastian Kurz, the OSCE's Chairperson-in-office and Foreign Minister of Austria. I would also like to take this opportunity to reiterate Liechtenstein's full support for Austria's chairship of the OSCE in 2017.

The recent security crises in Europe have been consistently accompanied by serious violations of international law and the fundamental principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter and the Helsinki Final Act, including the violations of the territorial integrity of Ukraine and Georgia. Those violations are warning signs that the commitment to stability and cooperation in Europe has lost its consensual basis. They also point to the need for taking incremental steps to rebuild security and confidence, above all in the military field, while convergence around a common vision for Europe's security remains out of reach.

More importantly, however, this is a time for Europe to look back at the lessons of its own conflict-ridden past, the most fundamental of which remains the primacy of the rule of law, democracy and economic integration over authoritarianism, demagogy and isolationism. The United Nations, with its Charter and the body of international law that it represents, is itself a product of that hard-learned lesson. The primacy of the law is intimately linked to the importance of accountability, in particular for the most serious crimes. Europe has itself experienced the value of justice for reconciliation and sustainable peace. Later this year, we are looking at an important step forward in international criminal justice with the upcoming activation of the crime of aggression within the framework of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. On the basis of its own history, Europe should be at the helm of the international community in outlawing the crime of aggression, and we are grateful that European States have ratified the Kampala amendments on the crime of aggression in significant numbers.

Conflicts in Europe, while prone to geopolitical exploitation, often have an important internal dimension, related to the insufficient protection of minorities or grievances of communities under highly centralized governance structures. Liechtenstein has consistently advanced the right of peoples to self-determination as a means to preventing and resolving internal conflicts, when applied in conformity with international law and without undermining the principle of territorial integrity. In such a way, the right to self-determination can result in appropriate levels of self-administration for entities within existing borders and based on consultation and negotiation processes, with third-party assistance where necessary. Under the Liechtenstein model, the appropriate level of self-governance will always be the result of an agreement between the concerned parties. The provisions of the Minsk agreements on decentralization and constitutional reform are compatible with those basic tenets of the Liechtenstein model, and are thus a case in point of the relevance of these discussions. Liechtenstein will continue to engage on that issue with all who are interested in the appropriate academic and diplomatic forums.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): With the permission of the Security Council, I would like to begin my statement by echoing the many heartfelt condolences expressed today over the passing of our friend, Ambassador Vitaly Churkin. His sudden departure is an irreparable loss not only for his family, to whom we extend our sympathy and solidarity, but also to the Russian Federation, which Ambassador Churkin served with dedication and patriotism, and to the United Nations, which lost an exceptional figure committed to inclusive multilateralism, the respect for international law and the peaceful settlement of disputes. We convey our affection and admiration to Ambassador Ilichev and his delegation for the work carried out by Ambassador Churkin at the United Nations and the mark he left on us all as a remarkable diplomat, teacher and human being. We regret that the Council has not been able to issue a declaration in memory of Ambassador Churkin. It is a matter of humanity, all the more so given his distinguished career as a diplomat.

In the interest of facilitating the dynamic development of sharing opinions during the session,

and after sharing some consideration in my national capacity, I will proceed to read a summarized version of the statement of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM).

We thank the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Mr. Pavlo Klimkin, for having convened this open debate on conflicts in Europe, the first of its kind. We also welcome the participation of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Secretary-General for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Secretary-General of the European External Action Service.

For the past 70 years, Europe has enjoyed a period of relative peace and stability that has allowed it to achieve significant levels of economic development and promote the integration, establishment and consolidation of regional multilateral institutions, which have played a key role in the maintenance of peace. Despite that progress, the European continent has endured conflict — in the former territories of Yugoslavia, for example. Today, like other regions of the world, Europe faces risks and challenges, such as the threat of terrorism and violent extremism; armed conflicts still unresolved; and social discrimation and exclusion, which call for comprehensive regional responses and the support of the United Nations, particularly that of the Security Council.

In that context, it is encouraging that Europe is committed to peace and that it strives to distance itself from the outdated notions of rampant imperialism, criminal colonialism, territorial conquest, the pillage of resources and the imposition of political, economic and cultural models that would serve their interests. Regrettably, on some occassions vestiges of those erroneous concepts have triggered illegal military interventions that have violated the independence and territorial integrity of sovereign States, such as Iraq and Libya, with tragic consequences that include illegal immigration from the Middle East and North Africa, the securitization and criminalization of which we reject. Those are the same consequences of the interventionist policies of some NATO countries.

Hence, after analysing the situation in Europe, our country is convinced of the importance of the peaceful settlement of disputes as the only way to resolve conflicts and establish international relations based on dialogue and cooperation, pursuant to the Charter of the United Nations. In that regard, regional and subregional organizations, like the OSCE, play an essential role in peacebuilding by promoting consensus and the recovery, reconstruction and development of societies emerging from conflict. It is worth noting that in the quest for lasting peace, regional forums must enhance synergies with the Security Council, in keeping with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, and in so doing avoid duplicated action and effort in the various areas of work. At the same time, the Security Council, pursuant to its specific mandate, must implement a responsible, transparent and inclusive conflict-resolution policy, without double standards nor geopolitical manipulation, that will best promote the maintenance of international peace and security.

After a broad review of the current conflicts in Europe, we wish to share some observations on specific crises.

With regard to Ukraine, Venezuela recognizes the diplomatic efforts embodied in the OSCE's various peace initiatives aimed at resolving that difficult situation, which has resulted in the unfortunate deaths of civilians. We reiterate our support for the Minsk agreements, signed by the Heads of State of Russia, Ukraine, France and Germany, with the support of the Security Council through resolution 2202 (2015), as the only way to reach a peaceful settlement to the conflict. We once again call on the parties to honour the ceasefire, not escalate the conflict and allow the agreements to be duly implemented, thus transcending extraregional interests. Further, the process requires that the key players facilitating that process abstain from applying unilateral coercive measures that would compromise the negotiations and be counterproductive to the shared objectives of peace and a lasting resolution to the armed conflict.

Kosovo will continue to play a prominent role in the agenda for peace in Europe for as long as the persistence of distrust between the parties and the exclusion of communities continues to hamper the potential for dialogue and stability. Nevertheless, we value the work of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo and the European Union mission, and consider resolution 1244 (1999) to be the relevant international legal basis for achieving a lasting peaceful resolution. We also reaffirm our full commitment to respecting the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Serbia.

As for the situation in Cyprus, one of the longest-standing conflicts in the history of the United Nations, we recognize the progress made by the parties through dialogue and negotiation over reunification initiatives. That is why we encourage representatives of the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities to maintain the spirit of political will in order to put an end to that dispute through a mutually beneficially agreement.

On behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, I note that we live a word that is facing various new, complex and emergent threats to international peace and security, including genocide and ethnic cleansing, war and protracted conflicts. One such protracted conflict is that between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which, we regret to say, has not yet been settled, despite the various relevant resolutions adopted by the Security Council. At the seventeenth NAM summit on Margarita Island, Venezuela, held in September 2016, the Heads of State and Government of the Movement encouraged the parties to continue to seek a negotiated solution to the conflict, while respecting the territorial integrity, sovereignty and the internationally recognized borders of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

In conclusion, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, in line with its foundational principles, reaffirms its commitment to promoting the peaceful settlement of disputes, in keeping with of Article 33 of Chapter VI of the Charter and relevant resolutions of the United Nations and international law, as a whole, with a view to contributing to the consolidation of international peace and security and saving future generations from the scourges of war and armed conflict.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Armenia.

Mr. Mnatsakanyan (Armenia): Like others, we were deeply shocked, saddened and grieved by the news of the passing of Ambassador Vitaly Churkin, a great man, a great friend and a great professional.

(*spoke in Russian*)

We express our sincere condolences to Vitaly's family, his wife, Irina, and his children, and to our colleagues and friends at the Russian Mission. This is a great loss for us all.

(*spoke in English*)

Vitaly was a man of wisdom; his wit and his professionalism will be greatly missed. But his memory will remain with us.

I thank the Secretary-General and the other briefers for their contribution to this debate. We share the concern reflected in the concept paper (S/2017/108) for this debate that despite the high expectations that Europe would become a strategically stable continent following the end of the Cold War, new challenges and threats have emerged on the continent in the 1990s.

However, apart from the broader geopolitical processes and religious, ethnic and territorial disputes, the causes of these challenges stem also from the blatant and violent denial of peoples' right to pursue their aspirations to freedom and self-determination.

The Nagorno Karabakh conflict is a case in point. It is a conflict that in effect has been a struggle of the people of Nagorno Karabakh for freedom and self-determination, a struggle against the historical injustice of the 1920s and persistent discrimination throughout the 70 years of Azerbaijani rule over them. It is a struggle that witnessed barbaric pogroms at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s against Armenians in Baku, Sumgait, Kirovabad and other parts of Azerbaijan, as a reaction to the legitimate aspirations of the people of Nagorno Karabakh to freely determine their future. It is a struggle for self-defence and the physical survival of the people of Nagorno Karabakh as a result of the outright aggression, war and ethnic cleansing unleashed against them by the newly independent Azerbaijan at the beginning of the 1990s.

The Nagorno Karabakh conflict is about the struggle of the people of Nagorno Karabakh against the claim of sovereignty over them by a despotic regime in Azerbaijan with a shocking human rights record that suppresses and suffocates any dissent and any aspiration to freedom and rights within its own jurisdiction. It is a struggle against the barbarity of a regime that glorifies Ramil Safarov, a ruthless murderer who in 2004 killed a sleeping Armenian officer with an axe, during a military training course. It is a struggle against a claim of jurisdiction by an authority in Azerbaijan that persistently cultivates and inspires Armenophobia, hatred and intolerance against Armenians. It is a struggle for freedom and survival. It is a struggle by the people of Nagorno Karabakh to freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic,

social and cultural development. It is, in other words, a struggle for the right to self-determination.

The renewed attempt at aggression by Azerbaijan against Nagorno Karabakh at the beginning of April 2016 and the ensuing perpetration of atrocities and outright barbarity, about which this delegation has consistently informed the Council, has been a stark reminder of the urgency of supporting the peace process under the auspices of the internationally agreed format of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group co-chairmanship. There is no alternative to a peaceful settlement of the conflict. War is not an option. The international community should forcefully reject the use of force and any pursuit of a military solution to this conflict.

The 1994-1995 ceasefire agreements signed by Nagorno Karabakh, Azerbaijan and Armenia constitute the foundation of the cessation of hostilities. Armenia urges Azerbaijan to take immediate and genuine steps towards the implementation of the agreements reached at the summits in Vienna and St. Petersburg in May and June 2016, respectively, in order to create conditions conducive to the advancement of the peace process. Azerbaijan should bring to an end without delay its persistent warmongering and cultivation of hatred and intolerance against Armenians and instead invest genuine efforts in promoting a culture of peace as well as respect for human rights.

Armenia urges Azerbaijan to demonstrate genuine political will and efforts in advancing the peace process on the basis of all the principles and elements put forward by France, Russia and the United States, the co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group, which have been reiterated in their numerous statements at all levels, including those by the Heads of State of the co-chairing States.

Finally, Armenia expresses its deep appreciation to the international community, to the Council and to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for their continued and unwavering support for the efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group co-Chairs, the only internationally agreed format for negotiations for the peaceful settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, to reach a lasting settlement as soon as possible.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Romania.

Ms. Dinculescu (Romania): I should like at the outset to express our deepest condolences to the Russian delegation in connection with the premature and sudden passing of Ambassador Vitaly Churkin.

Romania commends Ukraine for having convened this timely and important open debate of the Security Council. This meeting follows the Munich Security Conference, at which issues critical to global peace and security were discussed extensively.

Europe has long been a beacon of stability and prosperity, and we are certain that it will remain so. However, a few years ago we could not have foreseen that we would be discussing conflicts in Europe, and certainly not in the Security Council. Unfortunately, today Europe faces a wide array of challenges, starting with the one most relevant to the United Nations: respect for international law.

I wish to use the opportunity offered by this debate to mention some issues about protracted conflicts in the close vicinity of Romania that continue to pose challenges to regional security and stability, also affecting the European continent as a whole.

Sadly, decades of negotiation have not produced the expected solutions. As a result, countries are affected, trade is distorted and people have little chance of sharing the prosperity and stability of neighbouring regions. Alongside Transnistria in the Republic of Moldova, South Ossetia and Abkhazia in Georgia, or Nagorno Karabakh, the risk of seeing another protracted conflict around the Donbas region of Ukraine remains high.

Romania is convinced that, despite the setbacks and delays, the full implementation of the Minsk agreements is the only available and workable tool able to deliver a negotiated political solution and achieve enduring peace. We remain committed to supporting the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine.

As already mentioned, we strongly believe that respect for and full compliance with international law is the main element also in approaching protracted conflicts throughout the wider Black Sea region: in the Republic of Moldova, in Georgia and elsewhere. Only through negotiations and mutual respect can a peaceful settlement be envisaged.

The resolution of the conflict in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova remains a matter of high priority for us. Romania sees the 5+2 talks as the only format able to foster a political, negotiated and sustainable solution to the Transnistrian conflict, with

full respect for the Republic of Moldova's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. Romania expresses the hope that during the Austrian chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, all parties involved will continue to support this negotiation format and work towards a solution.

Romania has been active in regional organizations, and assisted the European Union and NATO in increasing the cooperation with our partners and friends, aiming at extending the space of stability and security. We will continue to do so relentlessly.

At the same time, we expect all actors to make the utmost efforts and to demonstrate political will to contribute to lasting political solutions, on the basis of the norms and principles set out in the United Nations Charter, while respecting the commitments already made.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Slovenia.

Ms. Drobič (Slovenia): Let me join others in conveying our sincere condolences to the Russian delegation on the passing of Ambassador Churkin.

We welcome the opportunity to address the Security Council on issues related to regional and international peace and security. Although most of the conflicts in Europe might not be very high on or at the top of the Security Council's agenda, that does not mean they are any less important or even irrelevant. Many of them have the dangerous potential of escalating into threats to peace and stability in a wider region.

It is very important that we recognize the negative effects that some of these conflicts have, especially with regard to the principle of respect for territorial integrity and the sovereignty of States. It needs to be continuously made clear that the disregard of the international order built through the decades is unacceptable. It may be imperative to address ongoing conflicts, but it is even more important to prevent them. Preventing disputes from escalating into conflicts must be accompanied by other endeavours to create an environment characterized by cooperative relationship. It is crucial that the resolution of conflicts be done through dialogue, using diplomatic and political tools and instruments.

The Security Council and the States Members of the United Nations should make better use of Chapters VI and VIII of the Charter. Prevention and timely peaceful resolution of potential conflicts are by far the most cost- and resources-efficient approaches. In this regard, it is also important to further enhance cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations, such as the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which should be utilized for preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping, peacemaking and post-conflict peace-building.

Slovenia has always been a staunch supporter of the principle of the peaceful resolution of conflicts through dialogue, cooperation and mediation. We wish to stress that the most important precondition for the resolution of the conflicts is respect for international law and implementation of international agreements in good faith.

I would like now to turn to some specific issues. We are very concerned by the worsening situation in eastern Ukraine. The peaceful resolution of the conflict in Ukraine is a *non plus ultra*. Talks within the Normandy format and the efforts of the OSCE must continue, and we appreciate the constructive roles of Germany and France in resolving the crisis through an open dialogue. It needs to be made clear that freezing the search for a solution is not an option. It would only protract the conflict and the suffering of the local population.

Slovenia, as a member of the European Union, supports the Union's common position on the necessity of a peaceful resolution of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno Karabakh in the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group and through respect for all relevant Security Council resolutions. We welcome and support the direct talks between Armenia and Azerbaijan as well as the activities engaged in by all other international community members that might lead to an agreement and contribute to a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Regarding the resolution of the conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Slovenia attaches great importance to the format established within the framework of the Geneva talks. Their continuation is essential for ensuring the security and stability of the region. We believe that Georgia should continue to cooperate with civil society in South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

Slovenia also welcomes the continuation of 5+2 talks on the Transnistrian settlement process, where we

positively assess the constructive commitment of both sides to engaging in dialogue. It is good that there is continuity in the efforts of the parties involved and in the efforts of the international community.

Constructive commitment and dialogue are always the best paths to follow, as we have seen in the progress regarding the issue of Cyprus and in the dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo.

We continue to be faced with numerous ever-changing challenges to international peace and security. Throughout history, but especially in the last 70 years, the international community has agreed on many instruments and tools to address challenges and prevent their escalation. It is therefore up to us to use them, individually and collectively.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Ms. Wilson (Australia): Let me begin by offering our heartfelt condolences to the colleagues, family and friends of Ambassador Churkin following his sad and untimely passing. As many have noted, Ambassador Churkin was an accomplished diplomat and representative. We will greatly miss his presence at the United Nations and particularly in the Security Council, where he played such a strong and formative role over many years.

While the Security Council spends much of its time on situations in Africa, today's debate reminds us that no region is immune from conflict. International peace and security is something that we must work towards collectively. The United Nations was created over 70 years ago for this purpose, following the world wars that started in Europe. And, since 1945, Europe has shown an alternative is possible. It has shown that negotiation is more effective than conflict, that cooperation yields more than nationalism, that even implacable opponents can talk, negotiate, cooperate and unite if the political will is strong enough.

The international community cannot take for granted the stability and prosperity Europe has enjoyed for decades. We must work hard to protect these achievements. We now face a period of instability, where core principles of international law — the primacy of State sovereignty and territorial integrity — are under threat.

Australia remains deeply concerned that aggression against Ukraine has resulted in the unlawful, purported annexation of Crimea and conflict in eastern Ukraine, which has already killed nearly 10,000 people, including over 2,000 civilians. Implementation of the Minsk Agreements remains an essential priority. Over 2 million people have fled the region since April 2014, and over 1 million continue living in dire conditions near the front line.

This conflict created the conditions that led to the downing of Malaysian Airlines flight MH17 in July 2014, which Australia felt first hand, along of with several other countries. The international community cannot forget this tragedy, and we must ensure that those responsible are held to account. Australia continues to work closely with the Joint Investigation Task Force countries to achieve this end.

We remain concerned about threats to Georgia's territorial integrity. It is critical that the Security Council take action to respond to acts of aggression, violations of territorial integrity and the failure to settle disputes peacefully. The permanent members of the Council have a particular obligation to lead by example when upholding the United Nations Charter's fundamental principles.

A threat to international peace and security in any part of the world is a threat to the entire international community. In this context, we welcome the new Secretary-General's commitment to utilizing his powers under Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations. We also welcome continued cooperation between the Security Council and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) as well as other regional organizations. The OSCE has provided critical support in Ukraine and elsewhere, including helping to negotiate ceasefires and facilitating investigator access to the MH17 crash site.

Australia calls on the parties to Europe's conflicts to reflect again on the founding principles of the United Nations — peace and security, human rights, social progress, respect for sovereignty, the peaceful settlement of disputes and cooperation among States. At its core lies a rules-based international order, the primacy of which we reinforce the importance of respecting. This is as much the case in Europe as it is elsewhere in the world.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. Blanchard (Canada): Following the death of our colleague, Ambassador Churkin, I would like to begin by expressing my most sincere condolences to his wife, Irina, his family, the entire Russian mission and the Russian people for their great loss. In addition to his exceptional legacy here at the United Nations, Vitaly Churkin left many good memories during his time as ambassador to Canada between 1998 and 2003. A few weeks ago I was having a discussion with Prime Minister Chrétien who was the Prime Minister during that period. Prime Minister Chrétien told me that he fond memories of his relationship with Ambassador Churkin.

I thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's open debate. The simple fact is that security and stability in Europe are in the interest of us all.

Canada's history as a nation has been defined by the struggle for peace, security and democracy in Europe. More recently, we have proudly participated in United Nations peacekeeping missions on the continent and remain engaged through our upcoming leadership of a NATO multinational battalion in Latvia, as well as our bilateral military capacity-building mission in Ukraine. I have three key points that I wish to convey.

First, we all have a stake in a stable, peaceful and prosperous Europe. Canada's commitment to European security remains steadfast, as demonstrated by our long-standing participation in key institutions, such as NATO and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and partnership with the European Union and the Council of Europe.

As Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs affirmed at last week's annual Munich Security Conference, the international security environment is more complex and challenging than ever, with increasingly unpredictable dynamics between major Powers and established institutions under sustained pressure. In that context, alliances and the rules-based international order matter more than ever. As Prime Minister Trudeau said to the European Parliament, European security is buttressed by trade and prosperity. In that regard, we are delighted to have concluded the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement.

Secondly, the United Nations and regional organizations must work together to best leverage their comparative expertise, knowledge and capabilities in the pursuit of peace in the region. The United Nations has learned many lessons on prevention, mediation and sustaining lasting peace. Under the leadership of its Secretary-General, the United Nations can be a powerful voice for peace and stability. But the United Nations cannot and should not go it alone. The European Union has successfully contributed to stability in the region by fostering institutions, structures and norms that embrace diversity and advance the rule of law.

Similarly, the OSCE deserves our recognition and support for its role in preventing and managing conflict in Europe. Canada especially values the OSCE's current efforts in Ukraine, where the Special Monitoring Mission has served as a critical confidence-building measure. Canada looks to the United Nations to work with the OSCE and the European Union to facilitate the Mission's access and, ultimately, to help resolve this festering conflict.

Thirdly, European security need not be a zero-sum game, but the sovereign rights of countries to determine their future must be respected. Canada does not and will not recognize Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea. That breach of international law has heightened tensions across and beyond Europe. Furthermore, Russia's material and political support to illegal armed groups in eastern Ukraine only fuels instability in the region. Our sanctions, like those of our partners, are tied to the full implementation of the Minsk agreements and respect for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Canada supports the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia, including South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which have been under Russian military occupation since 2008. Ultimately, peace and security in the region can be achieved only when sovereignty and territorial integrity are respected, preserved and restored.

Having identified the challenges, I would be remiss if I did not highlight recent successes.

The work of the United Nations, NATO and the OSCE in the Balkans has achieved considerable results. Much more remains to be done, of course, but it is important to remember how far we have come. Recent efforts towards a reunified Cyprus offer another important example. Its communities have been divided for too long. The peace talks deserve full support from the international community. Lasting peace can be achieved. Canada welcomes Secretary-General Guterres' personal involvement in the process, as well as the diligent work of the United Nations on the ground.

Canada's security is fundamentally and inextricably linked to peace and security in Europe. Our support for the United Nations and regional political and security institutions remains unwavering. The Security Council can count on Canada to work tirelessly to foster our collective security, both within Europe and worldwide.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Cyprus.

Mr. Mavros (Cyprus): At the outset, I would like to express our deep sadness about the death of Ambassador Vitaly Churkin, a prominent and highly experienced diplomat who skilfully represented Russia at the United Nations for more than a decade and contributed to the promotion of the United Nations agenda.

It is an honour to participate in today's discussion focusing on conflicts in Europe and their impact on international peace and stability. I would like to start by joining the previous speakers in conveying my Government's congratulations to the Ukrainian presidency of the Security Council for convening today's important meeting.

Cyprus aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union (EU), and would like to add the following remarks in its national capacity.

As a country that since its independence has relied heavily on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations in maintaining its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, Cyprus fully abides by the principles of the United Nations and international law. In the same way, Cyprus shares the concerns already expressed as regards the multiple challenges putting international peace and stability at risk. To that end, Cyprus fully subscribes to the statement made on behalf of the European Union, as regards the importance of further strengthening cooperation between regional and international organizations. Closer cooperation and strategic coordination at the regional and international level can lead to a more targeted and effective response from the international community to existing threats and dangerous developments.

We would like to thank Ukraine for including Cyprus in the concept note of today's open debate (see S/2017/108, annex). Cyprus has been on the agenda of the Security Council since 1963. The United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus is an example, in our view, of an efficient, cost-effective peacekeeping mission and a pioneer for gender parity in peace operations. The political track of the mission also constitutes an example of positive collaboration with the European Union, whose role is catalytic in the efforts for a solution that will be fully compatible with Cyprus rights and obligations as an EU member State.

Cyprus reiterates its profound appreciation to the Security Council and the Secretary-General for their continuous efforts towards the peaceful and lasting solution of the Cyprus question, in line with international law, the relevant Security Council resolutions and the European Union acquis. The ongoing negotiating process has reached a critical juncture. The convening of a conference on Cyprus, under the auspices of the Secretary-General, to address the international aspects of the problem — namely, security, which comprises the most fundamental elements of an eventual settlement, specifically the withdrawal of foreign troops, and the abolition of the anachronistic system of guarantees — is a watershed in the whole process.

We sincerely hope that all parties involved will demonstrate the requisite degree of commitment and political will so that the effort will yield results. We are most grateful for the Secretary-General's personal involvement and for the Security Council's strong signal of unity and support for the effort. Since the issues at hand fall within the remit of the Security Council, as the body with primary responsibility for the preservation of international peace and security, we consider it important to stress that the Council has an inherently particular role to exercise in that regard.

The successful outcome of the ongoing negotiation process in Cyprus has the potential to establish Cyprus as an international paradigm of peaceful co-existence and prosperous collaboration between its citizens, irrespective of their ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds. Such a development will not only transform Cyprus into a model country of stability and predictability for the region, but will also bear out the catalytic role of the SecurityCouncil in promoting international peace and stability.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of New Zealand.

Mr. Taula (New Zealand): I thank Ukraine for convening today's open debate.

With great sadness I, too, wish to acknowledge the passing of Ambassador Vitaly Churkin. New Zealand had the honour of working side-by-side with that

outstanding diplomat over the last two years. I would like to convey the deep condolences of the New Zealand Permanent Mission to the Russian Federation, and particularly to the members of the Russian delegation here in New York. Ambassador Churkin served his country with distinction and was deeply respected by all who worked with him. He will be greatly missed.

In Europe we have seen the significant role that regional organizations can play in reducing tensions and promoting peace and security. Monitors from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) are working in eastern Ukraine to assist efforts to consolidate a ceasefire. The European Union (EU) is facilitating dialogue in Kosovo between Belgrade and Priština, and is leading a multinational stabilisation force in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

EU support for the settlement negotiations in Cyprus under the auspices of the United Nations is also very welcome. We hope to see the role of regional organizations in Europe continue to be strengthened in support of peace, and we welcome their enhanced engagement with the Council. While there is much to feel encouraged about, we are concerned at the fact that some old animosities have been reasserting themselves in parts of Europe. Those ongoing tensions are a further demonstration of the need for the United Nations system and the Council to increase their conflict-prevention capability.

As a Security Council member, New Zealand was committed to working with others to take practical steps to improve the ability of the Council to prevent conflict. We hope that all Council members will continue to make good use of the tools at their disposal, such as the regular situational awareness briefings by the Secretariat and timely visiting missions to try to prevent conflicts before they break out. Unclogging the heavy agenda of the Council would be one way to help it focus on problem-solving and prevention, rather than on just managing conflict. We also encourage the Secretary-General to proactively use his good offices and other preventative-diplomacy tools to avert conflict, including briefing the Council at his own initiative in the spirit of Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations.

Conflict prevention is not easy. New Zealand is all too aware of how sensitive it can be in a practical sense within the Council, particularly when specific country situations are being discussed. But the Council should continue to assess how it can take practical steps to do better. Doing so will save lives and ensure a more cost-effective use of resources. There are a number of current threats to peace and security in Europe that New Zealand continues to be concerned about, as detailed by other speakers today.

In Ukraine, we urge all sides to ensure that the OSCE is able to effectively carry out the responsibilities entrusted to it by the parties with a view to establishing a lasting ceasefire. All parties must deliver on their obligations under the Minsk agreements. We reiterate our support for Ukraine's territorial integrity, and also the territorial integrity of Georgia. In Georgia, we call for internally displaced people to receive unimpeded humanitarian access and to be able to return to their homes. We also hope to see commitment from all parties to resolve tensions in Nagorno-Karabakh.

It is in the interests of all of us, and small States in particular, to ensure that the principles of the Charter and the international rules-based system are adhered to. New Zealand will continue to speak up in support of those principles, just as we did during our term on the Council.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Belgium.

Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): Allow me, first of all, to express my deepest condolences to the Russian Mission for the loss of Ambassador Churkin, who was also well-known in Belgium where he had also been stationed and where tribute was paid to him this morning.

I thank the Ukrainian presidency for organizing this open debate on the important subject of peace and security in Europe.

Belgium supports the statement made by the observer of the European Union and wishes to add the following remarks.

Let us first highlight the reasons to be concerned in the face of the increasing number of armed conflicts around the world. Today, war seems to have become once again an acceptable option and, for some, the continuation of aggressive diplomacy. That is a step backwards and an unacceptable insult to the ideals of the Charter of the United Nations. We must denounce this perplexing situation. The use of war and violence does not provide lasting solutions; on the contrary, it exacerbates crises and creates new threats.

European reconstruction is one of the most successful examples of political voluntarism, which led to reconciliation between historic adversaries. The experience of the European Union offers a reason to hope, as well as a source of inspiration, for all modern-day conflicts — sometimes portrayed as intractable — where the use of weapons is falsely portrayed as the only viable solution.

While most European countries have experienced an unprecedented period of peace in their recent history, that is also the result of the establishment of unique and efficient multilateral institutions. Alongside the previously mentioned European Union, let us also mention the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Atlantic Alliance, all of which have, in their respective fields, contributed to the stability of our continent. Now more than ever, those institutions must continue to play a central role in the peaceful management and prevention of conflicts in Europe. They are all actors that can, working in close cooperation and in conjunction with the United Nations, take effective action to promote the peace and stability of the European continent.

Fifty years ago this year, Belgium, through its then Minister for Foreign Affairs, Pierre Harmel, proposed an innovative vision for emerging from the division of the world resulting from Cold War logic. That vision, known as the Harmel Doctrine, advocated dialogue while maintaining a firm stance on the need to defend our values in a divided Europe. That doctrine helped pave the way for the East-West détente. Although the international context has evolved considerably since then, that doctrine is, in our view, still relevant today. Dialogue should serve to clarify our defence policies and postures, thereby becoming a prime confidence-building and security measure. That approach remains absolutely relevant today. Rebuilding confidence begins with respect for the agreed communication mechanisms of multilateral institutions in Europe.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate the full support of Belgium for the Secretary-General in his goal to increase the effectiveness of the United Nations in the area of conflict prevention. Belgium is ready to play its role in that field and has made contributions. Last week we organized an international conference in Brussels on mediation, and we propose to share the lessons from that conference later on, here at the United Nations.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Malaysia.

Mrs. Abdul Hamid (Malaysia): At the outset, I wish, on behalf of the Government of Malaysia, to extend our deepest condolences to the Government and the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation, as well as to the family of Ambassador Vitaly Churkin, on his sudden passing. Our Mission had the opportunity to work closely with him, especially during the past two years during Malaysia's membership in the Council, and we will miss his presence and friendship tremendously.

My delegation is grateful to Ukraine for organizing this timely open debate and to the distinguished briefers for their insightful briefings.

Over the past century, we have witnessed how European security is very much intertwined with the peace and security of the rest of the world. The two world wars had, in fact, started in Europe, and the very existence of the United Nations was a direct consequence of the Second World War. More than seven decades later, fortunately, we have not have seen conflicts in Europe to the scale and level as in the previous world wars. However, the prolonged frozen conflicts and the recent emergence of crises in the region are no less worrying, especially when major Powers are involved.

The conflicts in eastern Ukraine and Crimea, in particular, constitute a direct challenge to the very purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. It is difficult to imagine that, in this day and age, one could blatantly disregard the fundamental principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and the independence of States and gain territory by the illegal use of force with little consequence. Furthermore, what started off as a conflict in Europe later escalated and affected far-flung countries, including Malaysia, with the shocking downing of Malaysian Airlines flight MH17 in July 2014 — a tragic consequence of the Ukrainian crisis. Similarly, the so-called frozen conflicts in the southern Caucasus and the Transnistrian conflict continue to be a source of instability in the region and may spark bigger crises that could threaten international peace and security.

Malaysia believes that there is no lack of mechanisms — whether regional or international — to address the conflicts in Europe. Instead, what is lacking is political will by the conflicting parties to adhere to the Charter of the United Nations, the Helsinki Final Act and various United Nations resolutions. The protracted

conflicts in Europe have also exposed the inherent structural weakness of the Security Council, especially with regard to the veto power. This predicament will remain unless the Council takes responsibility to engage in reform, in the interest of global security and the common good, instead of narrow self-interest.

Malaysia believes that the international community has an important role to play to make it costly for the conflicting parties in Europe to use military means to achieve their political ends. We also need to support the parties to engage in dialogue, the de-escalation of conflict, confidence-building measures and mediation for a peaceful resolution of conflict. Malaysia welcomes the call by Secretary-General Guterres to intensify cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations to work closely together in preventing, managing and resolving crises under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. We commend the great stabilizing role played by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Union (EU) in bringing peace and stability to the region.

With regard to the conflict in Ukraine, we call on the parties to fully implement the Minsk agreements in order to facilitate a final, political solution to the conflict. We also urge all parties to fully cooperate with the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to enable it to carry out its mandate.

Meanwhile, in the western Balkans, we fully support the crucial role played by the EU and the OSCE in further strengthening democratic institutions, the rule of law and the process of reconciliation, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Kosovo. Learning from the traumatic experience of the Second World War, Malaysia believes that Europe has a lot to offer to the post-conflict countries in the Western Balkans, especially on the need to acknowledge atrocities committed in the past and to ensure accountability, in order to make progress towards reconciliation.

Malaysia also views the increasing isolationism, xenophobia and revisionism in Europe with great concern. Based on past experiences, the international community has good reason to be alarmed when European countries turn inward. We, therefore, sincerely hope that the countries in the region will remain united in their common values based on respect for human dignity and human rights, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law in order to ensure peace, stability and prosperity in the region and beyond.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Serbia.

Mr. Milanović (Serbia): Before I proceed to make my statement, I would like to take this opportunity to pay my respects to one of our own. Yesterday, Ambassador Vitaly Churkin, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, passed away in his office, hard at work representing his country and promoting the great causes of the United Nations. A stalwart of our Organization and a friend, he will be missed by all of us and we all owe him our utmost respect and gratitude. Our condolences also go to his family and colleagues from the Russian Mission.

At a time when the world and Europe are facing multiple and complex threats and challenges, the Government of the Republic of Serbia continues to render a maximum contribution to the efforts invested by the international community in maintaining international peace and security. In doing so, my Government proceeds from the conviction that multilateralism is the best response to all the risks that aggravate international relations. In this context, the purposes and principles of the United Nations, as defined in the Charter, continue to be just as important as they have ever been. Serbia supports the joint efforts of the United Nations and its Member States, as well as those of regional organizations, aimed at reaching acceptable and sustainable solutions through dialogue and cooperation to the conflicts and crises, including those in Europe.

The national priority of the Republic of Serbia remains the quest for a political solution to the question of Kosovo and Metohija. In this way, my country continues to uphold international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the supreme authority of the Security Council in safeguarding international peace and security and defends its national and historical identity. In these efforts, we are supported by many countries that continue to stand with us in their common struggle for respect for international law and refuse to accept the unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo, which is a serious threat to the international legal order and the key principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

For that reason, we attach priority importance to the activities of the United Nations Interim

Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). We consider that a status-neutral presence of UNMIK in its undiminished scope is of paramount importance for stability and the creation of conditions conducive to a durable and sustainable solution to the question of Kosovo and Metohija under resolution 1244 (1999). Consequently, we expect UNMIK to continue to carry out its mandate under the resolution, especially in the areas that are essential for the survival and normal and dignified life of the Serbs and the members of other non-Albanian communities.

My country is firmly committed to the political dialogue conducted between Belgrade and Pristina with the facilitation of the European Union and the implementation of its agreements. In doing so, we shall make every effort to protect the interests of the Republic of Serbia and its citizens, as well as peace and stability in the region. In that context, the establishment of the association community of Serb-majority municipalities continues to be the priority issue. The signing of the Brussels Agreement was motivated, first and foremost, by the aspiration to find proper modalities for systematic, institutional protection of the Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija because of the lack of adequate institutional mechanisms in that area. Under the Agreement, this is to be carried out by the said community, whereby it is substantively linked to the spirit of resolution 1244 (1999).

The support of the international community is of paramount importance for the success of this dialogue. The change of position with respect to the non-recognition of the unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo would have a negative effect on the continuation of a constructive approach by the parties to the dialogue and the implementation of the agreements reached thus far. This is our basic request: dialogue and agreement instead of unilateralism.

My Government will continue to strengthen regional cooperation and remain a constructive, committed and active partner in the promotion of relations and deepening, inter alia, the institutionalization of that cooperation, both in its bilateral ambit and within regional initiatives and mechanisms. To that end, we have invested many efforts and endeavours in stabilizing the situation in the region and we shall continue to do so to ensure that the future of the region is secured to ours. Working on its stability and cooperation is an investment to whatever life for all of us.

Serbia's readiness to overcome the negative legacy of the past and to commit to our common future, based on principles of mutual respect, is unquestionable. We are partners and we shall continue to be partners to all our neighbours and other countries of the region and beyond which are ready to share with us the burden and responsibility of furthering the joint historical undertaking of building a developed, stable and prosperous region as an integral part of Europe.

In that context, I would like to point out the importance that my country attaches to the stability and prosperity of its first neighbour, Bosnia and Herzegovina. More than 20 years have elapsed since the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement, which made it possible to end the suffering and establish peace after the tragic conflict in that country. The Agreement is on the cusp of its third decade, and, throughout its implementation, it has made an important contribution to reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the entire region. It has provided a basis for rebuilding confidence among that country's three constituent peoples and two Entities and continues to be of crucial importance for the country. As a signatory party to the Dayton Peace Agreement, Serbia supports each and every agreement adopted by the two Entities and the three constituent peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina. My country also supports good-neighbourly cooperation based on close relations with the central authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It will continue to promote and intensify cooperation with the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and deepen and enrich its special relations with the Republic of Srpska.

The European perspective of the countries of the Western Balkans serves the common denominator for regional cooperation and a contribution to the resolution of many outstanding issues in the region through dialogue. My country believes that the European Union is the best framework within which all of the countries of the region can realize their individual interests. The reforms that we have carried out over the past several years have demonstrated that we perceive our future as a [illegible] the European Union. The process of European integration will not be complete until the entire region joins the Union. It is a historic undertaking and calls for exceptional efforts, sacrifices, maturity and vision on the part of all parties involved in order to overcome the legacy of the past. My country has demonstrated, on many occasions, that it has the courage to act consistently and responsibly. That gives us the right to

expect that all other neighbours and our partners will act in the same manner in the interest of the future progress and prosperity of the entire region and Europe in general.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Montenegro.

Mr. Perović (Montenegro): I would begin by offering my sincere and deepest condolences to the Government of the Russian Federation, the family and the friends on the passing of our respected colleague, His Excellency Mr. Vitaly Churkin, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations.

Montenegro is pleased to contribute to this important debate and commends Ukraine for organizing it.

We live in an increasingly divided world, fractured by violence, conflicts and political breakdowns and other worrying developments that are threatening the future of entire generations. The European security landscape is also marked by instability, and our ideals are and will be repeatedly challenged. Furthermore, the international community, including the United Nations, constantly finds itself in crisis-management mode. By devoting all our energy to just one crisis or by just reacting to crises, we will never get things done. We should recognize the clear need for decisive action in reversing such trends, as well as the need for new ways of building peaceful and resilient societies and avoiding backsliding away from peace, security, basic respect for human rights and sustainable development.

We all know that prevention can work and does work, and that our Organization can do better. The price of overlooking prevention, on the other hand, is high and very easy to see. That is why we would like to underline the significance of United Nations early-detection and early-warning mechanisms. The Security Council must consider making better use of the wide range of tools at its disposal to prevent the emergence of conflicts. Needless to say, such an approach is far more cost-effective.

[illegible] to others for granted. We should learn from [illegible] every opportunity and we should keep in mind lessons learned in our continent. As a Montenegrin [illegible] experience that the best and truly the only sustainable way to solve differences and alleviate tensions and conflict situations is to use the tools of diplomacy and dialogue. The United Nations and the Security Council often become overstretched and overburdened with various crises, and cooperation and partnerships between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations in the area of peacebuilding should be strengthened. Those organizations should play a more active role in assisting and, if need be, in leading efforts to bring about peace and stability.

Regional and subregional organizations have deep knowledge and strong local networks and are, therefore, in a position to offer tailor-made approaches. Equally important, they ensure that the countries directly affected by crises are involved, as we have seen in many instances in Africa. For those reasons, the role of the European Union (EU) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in international security and in advancing peace in Europe is indispensable.

One of the latest examples of the proactive engagement of regional organizations from our region is the European Union-facilitated dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo on the normalization of relations. Montenegro welcomes that EU initiative, which is very much in line with our firm belief that there is no alternative to dialogue as we search for durable solutions. We know that putting dialogue into practice is not always easy and that any success will be possible only if there is strong and sustained political support by all States.

The maintenance of international peace and security is not the task of the United Nations and other international organizations alone. It is a process of individual, collective and institutional transformation and one of inclusive development. Without inclusive State institutions, we are unlikely to have other sustained peace or a basis for long-term development. We also believe that it is crucial to involve women and youth in the peacebuilding process as stakeholders and decision-makers, and that should be primarily the responsibility of all Member States and regions. But we need to strengthen our understanding of how international actors can support the process.

A collective global response and a stronger and more effective United Nations is needed to confronting the challenges of today's world. We should use the wide range of available tools at our disposal with focus and dedication to [illegible] crises. Working together towards a world free [illegible] and prosperity [illegible] challenges and opportunities [illegible] Montenegro is ready, [illegible] playing its part.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): In honour of your presidency, Sir, let me try to say this in Ukrainian: "I thank you very much, Mr President". I also thank you for being here at this late hour in our proceedings.

I should like to begin by offering our deepest condolences on the sad demise of Ambassador Churkin yesterday and through you, Sir, especially to his wife and children. He was an important interlocutor for the Kingdom of the Netherlands during his mandate on the Security Council, and he will be sorely missed.

I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this debate on the international maintenance of peace and security, with a special focus on conflicts in Europe.

The Netherlands aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier on behalf of the European Union (EU) and supports the statement made on behalf of Italy in the context of the two countries' split term in the Security Council for this and the coming year.

I will now make a shortened version of my statement, and the full text will be made available on my Twitter account.

We are glad to see that we continue to see discussion on peace, security, stability, conflict prevention, peacekeeping and the peaceful settlement of disputes. We will add to our discussion today our views on how those issues relate to the European experience.

On the first point concerning conflict prevention, we feel very strongly that multilateral cooperation lies at the heart of peace and security in Europe. Over the past 60 years, the European Union has shown its ability to bring peace where there was once conflict. Not once since the inception of the European Union has violent conflict erupted between any of its member States. Generations have grown up in the European Union without war being even a remote option. Other regional organizations, such as NATO, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe continue to play an important role in maintaining peace and security in Europe — all by addressing various aspects of conflict prevention, such as military protection, economic and political cooperation, assistance in democracy-building, and strengthening the role of the rule of law, of course, according to the wishes and needs of the parties involved. This is also known as the United Nations.

With respect to my second point, on peacekeeping, Secretary-General Guterres reminded us in January that prevention is best served by strong, sovereign States acting for the good of their people. But also in Europe, peacekeeping has been necessary when the basic tenets of international law have been violated. However, while peacekeeping missions can be critical to stabilizing conflict situations, they cannot resolve them. Ultimately, Europe's conflicts can be resolved only politically, not militarily. The current negotiations in Cyprus, on which we have just heard our colleague speak, underscore that point.

United Nations-mandated missions have played a constructive role in Cyprus and Kosovo, for instance. The United Nations does not need to carry the burden of resolving each and every conflict alone. Regional organizations like the EU, NATO, the OSCE and the Council of Europe all play essential roles in stabilizing conflicts zones in Europe and in brokering political solutions. We strongly believe that under the provisions of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, the United Nations should seek to reinforce cooperation with regional organizations wherever it can. United Nations support for the work of the OSCE in monitoring the implementation of the Minsk agreements, for example, sends a clear signal to the conflicting parties.

This brings me to my third point, the peaceful settlement of conflicts. Over the years, a number of European States sadly have seen their sovereignty challenged, their territorial integrity compromised. We witnessed this most recently in Georgia and Ukraine. This is compelling the United Nations should not condone or abide. The European security order is firmly based on the principles of sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity, the inviolability of borders, the peaceful settlement of disputes and the free choice of countries to decide their own future.

[illegible] on conflict management replacing conflict escalation. We see conflicts turning from hot to frozen. We see ceasefires instead of sustainable peace. But as the Indian poet in the classic fairy [illegible] reminding conflict can easily reignite. [illegible] Ghandi, [illegible] the international community [illegible] to [illegible] and to [illegible] and to [illegible] and

and accountability. We are convinced that, ultimately, there can be no lasting peace without justice.

The European experience teach us that when States focus on mutual benefits and respect for international law, conflicts need not occur. The United Nations is not there only to ensure the cessation of hostilities in conflict zones. We should focus much more on prevention, as the Secretary-General has indicated. And when conflicts do occur, the United Nations should pursue political resolutions vigorously and create an environment in which reconciliation can occur.

To that end, the United Nations should seek to cooperate with regional organizations and strengthen them. This holds as true in Europe as anywhere else in the world, so all nations may reap the benefits of peace and stability fully. The Kingdom of the Netherlands will continue to be a partner for peace, justice and development in that endeavour.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Albania.

Mr. Rakipi (Albania): At the outset, I would like to extend my own condolences at the loss of Ambassador Vitaly Churkin to the Mission and Government of the Russian Federation, as well as to his family.

I thank the delegation of Ukraine for choosing such an interesting and important topic for the second open debate of their presidency. I will focus my intervention on issues of stability and security in my region, South-East Europe.

Albania has continuously given its facilitate peace, reconciliation and cooperation in our part of the world. Only two decades ago, South-East Europe experienced one of the most tragic conflicts after the Second World War.

Today, thanks to the contribution by NATO and the European Union (EU), in cooperation with the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), our region is more peaceful and secure than it has known in its long and troubled history. All the Western Balkan countries are now involved, albeit to different ages, in the process of European and Euro-Atlantic integration. They are actively cooperating with each other. Dialogue has replaced conflict and clash of arms. Nonetheless, although the progress achieved is obvious, it remains fragile and can be put at risk if some irresponsible and provocative actions have occurred lately. If the unfinished business in the Western Balkans is not properly addressed.

The EU-facilitated dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia needs to accelerate and lead to the normalization of relations between the two countries. It needs to be concluded with mutual recognition and full membership of Kosovo in the United Nations.

European integration is the common denominator in the region and the most effective driving force for peace and cooperation. As a key stabilizing factor in the region, the European Union has a major, irreplaceable role to play as a mediator and a peacebuilder. In that context, the European Union needs to step up its engagement in the Balkans and lead us towards our final and natural destination: EU membership. Any alternative visions are as perilous for the security of our region as they are for the EU. Failure to achieve EU integration risks fuelling nationalist politics and ethnic or religious divisions. Let us not forget that our regional peace and stability are closely interconnected with Europe's security architecture. In other words, the Balkans need Europe today as much as Europe needs the Balkans.

There are still many challenges in our region, and we must all work together to stay the Euro-Atlantic course. Threats, provocations and inflammatory rhetoric lead nowhere and draw us back in time to a dark chapter in Europe's history. We should be building bridges, not erecting walls. Albania has always actively contributed to strengthening regional cooperation, based on the principles of good-neighbourliness and all-inclusiveness. That is also what we seek to achieve through the so-called Berlin process, convinced that connectivity is the key word.

The United Nations should shore up the role of the EU in our region and also deepen the strategic dialogue with regional organizations, notably NATO and the OSCE, in order to forge common approaches and provide collective responses to protracted conflicts. A stronger global-regional partnership is needed to ensure that the Security Council can rely upon a more resilient and diversified network of actors in order to efficiently prevent and resolve conflicts.

[illegible] Europe and the world need today is to build bridges of cooperation and mutual respect. Human security can be achieved by instilling hope for a better common future. In our national case, Mother Theresa,

taught us, "If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other".

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Uzbekistan.

Mr. Madrakhimov (Uzbekistan) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, I want to express our sincere condolences in connection with the sudden death of the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, Vitaly Ivanovich Churkin. We were stunned and deeply saddened by this news. The memory of this wonderful and bright person will always remain with us. We offer our support and condolences to the family of Vitaly Churkin and all our colleagues in the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation.

(*spoke in English*)

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

At the outset, I would like to thank the Ukrainian presidency for convening this open debate on the the topic "Maintenance of international peace and security: conflicts in Europe", and for submitting the concept note on the topic (S/2017/108, annex).

International peace and security are faced nowadays with many threats and challenges, and it is important that the United Nations and regional and other organizations enhance their cooperation to address them comprehensively and effectively. The Charter of the OIC reaffirms the commitment of its Member States to the Charter of the United Nations and stresses their determination to contribute to international peace and security, understanding and dialogue among civilizations, cultures and religions, and to promote and encourage friendly relations and good neighbourliness, mutual respect and cooperation.

The OIC is an important partner of the United Nations in promoting peace, security and post-conflict reconstruction, fostering a culture of peace and enhancing cooperation in the humanitarian, human rights, social, economic and cultural fields. In its presidential statement of 28 October 2010 (S/PRST/2010/18), the Security Council recognized and further encouraged the active contribution of the OIC to the work of the United Nations towards the realization of the purposes and principles embodied in the Charter of the United Nations.

The OIC has consistently expressed its principled position on the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Most recently, that position was reiterated at the thirteenth Islamic Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the OIC Member States, held in April 2016 in Istanbul, and during the forty-third session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, held in October 2016 in Tashkent.

In the final communiqué of the thirteenth Islamic Summit and in the special resolution adopted by the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, the OIC Member States, inter alia, reaffirmed that the acquisition of territory by use of force was inadmissible under the Charter of the United Nations and international law, urged the strict implementation of Security Council resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993) and the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of the armed forces of Armenia from the Nagorno Karabakh region and other occupied territories of Azerbaijan, and called for the resolution of the conflict on the basis of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of the internationally recognized borders of Azerbaijan.

Following the decision of the thirteenth Islamic Summit, the Contact Group on the aggression of the Republic of Armenia against the Republic of Azerbaijan was established within the OIC. At its first ministerial-level meeting, held on 19 September 2016 in New York, on the sidelines of the general debate of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session, the Contact Group, inter alia, stressed the importance of putting the conflict at the top of the international agenda in order to find a negotiated settlement. The OIC looks forward to working closely with the United Nations, the OSCE and other partners in fostering the earliest possible resolution of the conflict, based on the aforementioned position, and to bringing peace and stability to the region.

In conclusion, I would like to express once again the commitment of the OIC to remaining a strong and active partner of the United Nations in addressing issues of mutual interest and concern and in promoting global peace, security and development.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Bulgaria.

Mr. Tomov (Bulgaria) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, I should like to express the sincere condolences of the Government of Bulgaria in connection with

the passing of an outstanding diplomat and human being, the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Ambassador Vitaly Ivanovich Churkin.

(*spoke in English*)

It is a privilege and honour for me to be here today to engage in this discussion. Let me first thank Ukraine for convening today's debate on a topic of particular importance to my country, and all the briefers for their comprehensive presentations.

As has already been highlighted, the end of the Cold War unleashed a profound geopolitical transformation in Eastern Europe that doubled the number of States on the map. Most of the border changes came about peacefully, but the continent also witnessed a level of violence unseen since the end of the Second World War. The United Nations and the relevant international organizations in Europe have been engaged in finding peaceful and sustainable solutions to the conflicts. The applied tool box has been extensive, from outright military interventions, through peacekeeping and preventive deployment, to the incentives of membership in the European and the Euro-Atlantic institutions. In some instances we have celebrated success, in others, painful lessons had to be learned.

Many of the countries that went through difficult times have been able to turn the page and to prosper. However, there are still a number of protracted and unresolved conflicts in Europe that remind us that the post-Cold War transition is not yet over. In the current global instability, it is essential that no efforts be spared to resolve the conflicts in Europe. If any conflict is to be resolved, it is vital that all parties be guided by and respect the relevant international law and the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, in particular the principle of preserving and respecting the territorial integrity of countries — a core principle of the post-1945 world order.

In recent years, however, the international consensus on the principle of territorial integrity has begun to erode, with an impact on Georgia and Ukraine, among others. This poses a great danger to stability and security in Europe, as wherever the principle of territorial integrity is challenged violent confrontations and bloodshed arise as a natural consequence, as even in a number of instances

Regional organizations have demonstrated that they can play a constructive role in conflict resolution. In today's world of global challenges, international organizations have to find a smart balance between the principles of subsidiarity and complementarity, while taking into account the particularity of each conflict and its context.

Bulgaria is eager to see a peaceful way out of the crisis in Ukraine, with full respect for the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of the country within its internationally recognized borders. What remains most important is to guarantee the full implementation of the agreed package of measures and, first and utmost, to abide by the latest ceasefire, to complete the withdrawal of heavy weapons, and to grant unhindered access to the Special Monitoring Mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to all sites. That would allow the Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group of the OSCE to accelerate the implementation of the Minsk agreements.

Bulgaria reaffirms its strong support for the unity, territorial integrity and sovereignty of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders. We support the Geneva international discussions and the meetings in the framework of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism in Gali and Ergneti, which are essential to stabilizing the situation on the ground and achieving a lasting solution of the conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

We fully back the Minsk Group co-Chairs and support the negotiations on a comprehensive settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict without precondition. The best prospect for a peace settlement is to continue the mediation efforts of the Minsk Group, as the internationally established format endorsed by the Security Council. We stress the importance of re-engaging in meaningful negotiations and of moving beyond the status quo, as we believe that the status quo is not a solution.

We appeal to all sides in the aforementioned conflicts to be engaged in reaching concrete results on outstanding issues, such as commitment to the non-use of force and the improvement of the humanitarian and security situations of the affected population. We believe that the United Nations is well positioned to monitor developments on the ground, including the implementation of agreements, and respect for human rights, thereby providing the members of the Security

Council with objective and quality information in a timely manner.

Even though we are all aware that there is no one-size-fits-all solution to addressing conflicts in Europe, it is evident that the unity of efforts within the Security Council, complemented by the engagement of the Secretary-General and the support of the relevant regional organizations, represent a potent force. An illustration of the promise of such an alignment can be found in the current phase of the peace process in Cyprus, where the Security Council is united behind renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus, the Secretary-General is providing his good offices and the European Union is giving constructive support to efforts to reach a solution based on the relevant Council resolutions.

We firmly believe that — despite major setbacks such as the recent encroachments on the territorial integrity of Ukraine, Georgia and other countries in Eastern Europe — the European continent can be conflict-free, and that vision can be realized by creating synergies between the efforts of the relevant international organizations and through the good-faith commitment of all the parties involved.

The President: The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I give him the floor.

Mr. Ilichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would once again like to thank the delegations that have expressed their condolences on the death of the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, Mr. Vitaly Ivanovich Churkin. Their support at this difficult time is very important to us.

With regard to today's meeting, we had hoped that in the light of the concept note prepared by the presidency (S/2017/108, annex) we would be able to work together to come up with complementary approaches to finding ways of emerging from the crisis in the European region. While the paragraph in the note on the unpreparedness of the parties to conflict to meet their obligations under existing agreements ascribed them to a lack of political will, our position was that we would have ideas about how the Security Council could help them to achieve that. We also hoped that our joint efforts would enable us to persuade Kyiv as to the necessity of fulfilling the Minsk agreements and many delegations have spoken about that today. The Ukrainian authorities must understand that the package of measures is not a dead end but rather a means of salvation for Ukraine that will enable it to preserve its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Regrettably, we are not quite certain that we were able to move forward in that direction today.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Armenia to make a further statement.

Mr. Sonyelian (Armenia): The people of Nagorno Karabakh chose their path to the future and democracy a quarter of a century ago. That path is irreversible. Finalizing and formalizing that process is the only way to bring stability and security to the region and for that there are two requirements — compromise and realism.

A couple of delegations have made accusations about my country, and I would strongly encourage them to read the meeting record of my Ambassador's statement when it becomes available, since it addresses those accusations very effectively. Nonetheless, one claim was made by the representative of Azerbaijan with regard to a new referendum conducted yesterday in Nagorno Karabakh. It is ironic that a country with a poor human rights record can challenge or question a referendum that represents one of the truest possible exercises of their human rights by the people of Nagorno Karabakh.

Clearly no one, especially Azerbaijan, can deprive the people of Nagorno Karabakh of their right to organize a referendum. I do not want to go into detail over this, but it is about a difference in perceptions of democracy. I will confine myself to bringing to the Council's attention to two major pieces of news yesterday and today in the region. Google to satisfy curiosity will show that a referendum is conducted in Nagorno Karabakh, giving the population an opportunity to express their will regarding their future form, development and constitutional forms. The top news item in Azerbaijan at the same time was about a decree signed by the President Azerbaijan appointing the country's First Lady to the country's first Vice-President.

[illegible] I will say in bringing the Council's attention to the differences between its own perceptions of democracy.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Azerbaijan [illegible] statement.

Mr. Musayev (Azerbaijan): The comments of the representatives of Armenia at today's meeting exemplify that Member State's consistent attempts to deny the facts behind its policies of aggression, hostility, hatred and outright lies and falsifications. The Armenian side's claims and misinterpretations sound particularly astonishing within the Security Council, which in 1993 adopted a series of four resolutions condemning Armenia's use of force against Azerbaijan and occupation of its territory and demanding the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal from Azerbaijan of all Armenia's occupying forces. It is curious that the representatives of Armenia — which bears the primary responsibility for unleashing war and perpetrating aggression against Azerbaijan, carrying out ethnic cleansing on a massive scale, committing other serious crimes during the conflict and advocating undisguised racist ideology — are attempting to criticize and lecture others.

However, their futile efforts collapse as easily as a house of cards against a background of facts that testify to a diametrically opposite situation. In reality, the successive Governments of Armenia have established a notorious pattern of complete disrespect for the generally accepted norms and principles of international law. Committing war crimes and crimes against humanity, sponsoring international terrorism, adhering to a dubious ethno-religious ideology and making territorial claims against its neighbours have become a sort of norm in the conduct of that Member State.

I would like to cite Armenia's current President, Mr. Serzh Sargsyan, by referring to his words in a famous interview that he gave in 2000 to a British journalist, Thomas de Waal, with regard to the tragic genocide that occurred in the Azerbaijani town of Khojaly. In that interview, Mr. Sargsyan said,

> "Before Khojaly, the Azerbaijanis thought that ... the Armenians were people who could not raise their hand against the civilian population. We needed to put a stop to all that. And that's what happened."

In response to the journalist's question as to whether things could have happened differently, and whether he had any regrets about the deaths of thousands of people, the Armenian Head of State answered quite clearly that he had "absolutely no regrets, since such upheavals are necessary ... even if thousands have to die." I think that there is no need for any further comment in that regard.

The stance of Armenia is an open challenge to the conflict settlement process and a serious threat to international and regional peace and security. The earlier the officials of that country realize the lack of any prospect of the unconstructive and dangerous political agenda, the sooner our peoples will be able to benefit from peace, stability and cooperation.

The President: I shall now make a further statement in my national capacity.

This morning, the Russian representative, in his statement, claimed that failure to implement the agreement signed by the opposition, former President Yanukovych and European observers three years ago, on this very day of 21 February 2014, brought about all the problems my country faces today. He failed to mention that the Russian representative at those negotiations was the only one who did not sign the document. He also failed to mention that as early as 20 February 2014, while the Moscow representative was sitting at the negotiating table in Kyiv, Russian troops had started a military operation in Crimea. No wonder the Russian envoy declined to sign that document.

The chain of events that followed is well known: the occupation and attempted annexation of Crimea, and the destabilization of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, with overt Russian military intervention. Since the early 1990s, Russia has created a belt of instability at its borders, and that instability keeps spreading to Europe and beyond. That is why, when Russia says it wants a united Europe from Lisbon to Vladivostock, we must indeed take Putin's assertion that Russia has no borders as not merely a joke. In the context to a united Russia, the reference in the statement of the Russian representative earlier today was not just a slip of the tongue.

Russia sees nothing wrong in recognizing documents issued by authorities in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, which are not under the control of the Ukrainian Government. However in resolution 2166 (2014) on the downing of MH17, there is a clear reference to the fact that those areas are controlled by armed groups. Now, the Russian Federation recognizes documents issued by leaders of those armed groups. In resolution 2202 (2015), the Security Council reaffirmed its full respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine. Recognition of the

documents of the authorities acting in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions is a clear violation of that resolution. I wonder, how can one recognize documents of non-recognized entities?

With regard to the Minsk agreements, despite the recent agreement of yet another ceasefire reached in Minsk and fully supported by the Russian Federation at the Normandy format meeting in Berlin just a couple of days ago, on 18 February, the Russian-backed militants continue to shell territories under the control of the Ukranian Government, including residential areas. Since 18 February, there have been more than 70 such attacks. The matter of who is undermining the implementation of the Minsk agreements is quite obvious.

Finally, a country that violated all possible agreements with Ukraine referring to the territorial integrity and sovereignty of my country, from the Memorandum on Security Assurances in Connection with the Republic of Belarus's Accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, the Border Treaty, the Partition Treaty on the Status and Conditions of the Black Sea Fleet and more, is not in a position to lecture anyone on the implementation of agreements nor on international law.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.